

University Students' Sport Participation:
The Significance of Sport and Leisure Careers

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By

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Abstract

There is now national and international evidence which indicates that those who have higher educational qualifications are more likely to be present-day and future sport participants than those who leave education once they reach the minimum school-leaving age. In Britain, despite significant government policy and financial investment in interventions designed to boost youth sport participation alongside other favourable trends, including a doubling in the proportion of students entering higher education (HE) since the 1980s, the rates of sport participation among the general population, including young people, have remained relatively static. This is particularly significant for, if attending HE does indeed help explain why university students are more likely to become present-day sport participants and remain sports-active into later life, then one might have expected to observe increases in participation by young people and adults over the last three decades or so. Since this has not happened, definitive conclusions about whether there is a HE effect on sport participation and, if so, what this effect/these effects are, cannot yet be drawn. The central objective of this study, therefore, was to explore this apparent paradox by analysing the development of 124 20-25-year-old undergraduate students' present-day sport and leisure participation via a retrospective analysis of their sport and leisure careers. The study employed a cross-sectional, mixed-methods, research design incorporating structured and semi-structured interviews held at two universities in England between March and July 2011.

The findings indicated that the two clearest predictors of differences in the present-day sport participation and sport careers of university students were subject of study and sex, with sport students and males being the most likely participants over the life course and whilst at university. These differences first emerged during childhood, widened from age 12-13-years-old, and remained relatively set from age 16 onwards. The differences in the present-day sport participation of university students, and the richness of their overall sport careers, could thus not be attributed to a 'HE effect' as previous research has suggested. It was during childhood, rather than youth, when the preconditions required for constructing short- or longer-term sport (and leisure) careers were formed. The differential childhood socialization practices students' experienced played a crucial role in the development of sporting habituses and dispositions within their unfolding networks (or figurations) which provided the foundations upon which present-day inequalities in participation were based. In this regard, the assumed contribution attending HE has previously been expected to make to students' current and future sport participation appears to have been over-stated, and in so doing diverted attention from other processes associated with the inequalities that underlie students' differential engagement in sport. It seemed that the context of university did little to promote overall levels of student participation, the numbers of sports they played, and the facilities they used. At best, attending HE may have simply delayed the drop-out from sport among those with already established and longer-running sport careers prior to attending university. In this regard, the present focus on raising sport participation among 14-25-year-olds by various sports organizations and facilitators would appear misguided and perhaps doomed to failure, for the evidence of this study suggests that a more appropriate focal point for policy interventions concerned with boosting longer-term participation is not with youth, but with children.

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Introduction

Sport participation and health as sources of concern

As Furlong (2013, p. 5) has noted, ‘there is always a high level of interest in young people when they are perceived to be a problem’ whether as a consequence of their threat to social order (e.g. through urban disorders), their engagement in activities assumed to pose a risk to themselves and others (e.g. via the use of legal and illegal drugs), and their contribution to social integration and economic competitiveness and efficiency (e.g. in terms of rates of unemployment and labour market supply and demand). To this might be added young people’s sport¹ participation which has for a long time been of concern to many occupational groupings, for various reasons, globally.

Of particular importance to this thesis is the longstanding – but largely ideological and uncritically accepted (see Malcolm, 2014; Waddington, 2000) – link between sport, physical activity and health promotion, the significance of which has been reinforced by present-day concerns over health in many countries (Public Health England, 2014). Writing in 2010, the World Health Organization (WHO) (2010) noted that physical inactivity is the fourth leading risk factor for global mortality (six per cent of deaths globally), after high blood pressure, tobacco use, and high blood glucose, while overweight and obesity account for five per cent of global mortality. It went on to add that:

Levels of physical inactivity are rising in many countries with major implications for the general health of people worldwide and for the prevalence

of NCDs [noncommunicable diseases] such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes and cancer and their risk factors such as raised blood pressure, raised blood sugar and overweight. Physical inactivity is estimated as being the principal cause for approximately 21–25% of breast and colon cancer burden, 27% of diabetes and approximately 30% of ischaemic heart disease burden. In addition, NCDs now account for nearly half of the overall global burden of disease. It is estimated currently that of every 10 deaths, 6 are attributable to noncommunicable conditions. (WHO, 2010, p. 10)

As part of the cross-government *Moving More, Living More* campaign, which seeks to develop a healthier nation as part of the 2012 London Olympic and Paralympic Games legacy (HM Government, 2014), Public Health England (2014, p. 6) has also argued that:

Physical inactivity directly contributes to one in six deaths in the UK: the same number as smoking. Around a quarter of us are still classified as inactive, failing to achieve a minimum of 30 minutes of activity a week. In some communities only one in ten adults are active enough to stay healthy.

In the light of these health problems, low levels of sport participation – as a component of physical activity – in many sectors of the population have been identified as a particular cause for concern. This is because being physically active can contribute to the prevention and reduction of NCDs (e.g. coronary heart disease, some cancers, obesity, hypertension, type 2 diabetes) and incidence of mental illnesses such as depression and anxiety, can assist in the control of body weight, and

help prevent osteoporosis via improvements in bone health, bone strength and balance (Department of Health, Physical Activity, Health Improvement & Protection [DHPAHIP], 2011; National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention & Health Promotion, 2004; Public Health England, 2014; WHO, 2004, 2010). Enhancing sport participation and physical activity over the life course, but especially during the critical life-stages of childhood and youth, is also now one justification for policy designed to promote physically active lifestyles (e.g. Department of Culture, Media & Sport [DCMS], 2012; DHPAHIP, 2011; Public Health England, 2014; Sport England, 2014a). Of particular interest in many countries has been the need to reduce the number of people who drop out of sport, particularly young people upon the completion of compulsory schooling, whilst retaining and increasing the small proportion of adults who remain active throughout their lives (House of Commons Culture, Media & Sport Committee, 2014; Lunn et al., 2013; van Tuyckom & Scheerder, 2010a; Sport England, 2014a).

Sport participation, youth and higher education

In England, which provides the context within which the research reported in this thesis was undertaken, the DCMS and Sport England have made ‘a consistent increase in the proportion of people regularly playing sport’ (DCMS, 2012, p. 3) a key policy priority and have identified those aged 14-25-years-old as a key target group in that endeavour. Sport England (2014a, p. 2), in particular, have claimed that while a ‘high proportion of young people regularly take part in sport’, there remains a need to ‘raise the percentage of 14-25 year olds playing sport once a week’ (Sport England, 2014a, p. 3) to benefit health and help achieve other social policy goals. This commitment has been made in light of the realization that despite significant policy

and financial investments made in sport by government and other agencies since the 1960s in particular, the rates of sport participation among the general population, including young people, in Britain since the late-1980s have remained relatively unchanged (Coalter, 2013; Downward & Rasciute, 2014; Rowe, 2009, 2014; Sport England, 2014a). More specifically, drawing on its *Active People Survey* (APS) data, Sport England (2014a: 3) have noted that although ‘the number of 16-25s taking part has remained flat in recent years, the rate of participation ... has declined’ before stabilizing again at around 58 per cent for those aged 14-25-years-old. In addition, they have argued that by age 25 ‘almost all young people (90%) have left education’ and that the transition ‘out of education represents a cliff edge in terms of the tailored sport offer’ (Sport England, 2014a, p. 8) intended to enhance sport participation among young people.

Since leaving education or, more precisely, higher education (HE), is considered to represent a ‘cliff edge’ after which well-known declines in sport participation occur, Sport England have sought to promote participation among students who attend HE through a variety of policy investments and programmes. One of these programmes was *Active Universities*, which was launched in 2011 with the support of £8 million of National Lottery funding distributed to 41 three-year projects ‘tasked with encouraging students to increase the number of times they are playing sport a week as well as retaining students in these sport activities throughout their time at university’ (Sport England, 2013, p. 2). Following the perceived success of *Active Universities* – in which all of the programmes were said to have increased by two per cent the proportion of students playing sport regularly – in June 2014 Sport England distributed a further £10 million of National Lottery monies to 54 universities in

England through its *Universities Activation Fund* (Sport England, 2014b). The purpose of this funding was to maintain the 52 per cent of HE students who participate in sport at least once per week, but also

increase it by trialling new methods of getting students into sport and offering a wider variety of opportunities to keep them playing sport during their time at university. The projects will particularly concentrate on those that do not currently play. It will also help tackle the issue of many young people giving up sport in their late teens and early twenties. (Sport England, 2014b)

The policy focus on boosting sport participation among existing participants and recruiting new participants via programmes such as *Active Universities* and the *University Activation Fund* is perhaps unsurprising for, as evidence from national and international studies has indicated (e.g. Breivik & Hellevik, 2014; Coalter, 2013; Fridberg, 2010; Haase et al., 2004; Lunn et al., 2013; van Bottenburg et al., 2005; van Tuyckom & Scheerder, 2010a), students with HE qualifications are more likely to participate in sport than those who do not have such qualifications. This is also the case in England, where those who attend HE are more likely to be present-day participants and remain sports-active into later life than those who leave education once they reach the minimum school-leaving age (Coalter, 2013; Coalter et al., 1995; Warde, 2006). It is worth noting, however, that despite initial increases in sport participation since the 1970s, which was supported by a sustained period of government investment in local authority sports facilities and other policy initiatives (Roberts, 2014; Rowe, 2015), youth and adult sport participation rates remain relatively static (Coalter, 2013; Rowe, 2009, 2015). Indeed, as explained in Chapter 1,

despite the introduction in the 1960s of numerous interventions and programmes intended to boost sport participation and other favourable trends, including a doubling in the proportion of students entering HE since the 1980s (Roberts, 2010; Universities UK [UUK], 2014), the expected increases in sport participation rates have not occurred.

Given those young people who remain in full-time post-compulsory education, especially HE, are more likely to participate in sport into their late-teenage years and early twenties (Birchwood et al., 2008; Coalter, 2007, 2013), it is unclear why this process has not been associated with increased participation among adults and youth in Britain. This is particularly significant for, if attending HE does indeed help explain why university students are more likely to become present-day sport participants and remain sports-active into later life, then one might have expected to observe increases in participation by young people and adults over the last three decades or so. Since this has not happened, definitive conclusions about whether there is a HE effect on sport participation and, if so, what this effect/these effects are, cannot yet be drawn. As explained in more detail in Chapter 1, some authors have speculated that childhood, rather than youth, is the critical life-stage in which differences in present-day sport participation are generated through processes of habitus formation (e.g. Birchwood et al., 2008; Parry, 2013; Pot et al., 2014; Quarmby & Dagkas, 2010, 2013; Stuij, 2013), and that the unequal accumulation of sporting capital in this period helps provide the foundations (e.g. Roberts, 2014; Rowe, 2015) on which future participation in settings such as HE is based. Notwithstanding the attractive simplicity of the claim which suggests that time spent in HE makes an independent difference to rates of sport participation (Birchwood et al., 2008), the absence of much convincing

empirical evidence means that we should be rather more cautious about the conclusions we draw about the links between HE and sport participation, and more systematic research such as that presented in this thesis is needed on this matter.

Defining youth

Before outlining the structure of this thesis which investigated the association of HE and sport participation, it is important to consider how sociologists and other social scientists conceptualize 'youth'. As Furlong (2013, p. 1) has noted, while it is notoriously difficult to define 'youth', there is general agreement amongst sociologists that it represents 'a socially constructed intermediary phase that stands between childhood and adulthood', and which is constructed differently across time and from one society to another. It is thus not defined 'as a stage that can be tied to specific age ranges, nor can its end point be linked to specific activities, such as taking up paid work or having sexual relations' (Furlong, 2013, p. 1). Instead, youth is perhaps most adequately recognized as a 'period of semi-dependence that falls between the full dependency that characterizes childhood and the independence of adulthood' (Furlong, 2013, p. 3). For the purposes of this thesis, the broad age category that typically characterizes this period of 'semi-dependence' is roughly between 15- and 25-years-old (Green, 2010, 2014), though it is recognized that within this age group the lifestyles of young people may be very diverse. Nonetheless, this conceptualization of youth was particularly significant for the present study since it includes the time at which many young people make the transition (usually when aged 18) into HE in England, which provided the focus for this thesis. Indeed, as Chapter 2 makes clear, the group of young people who participated in this study were aged 20-25-years-old and who at the time the study was conducted were defined as

‘traditional’ full-time undergraduate students following courses in sport, business studies, and psychology.

Since ‘youth’ and the ‘youth life-stage’ are defined, understood and experienced in various ways from one society to another, and within different societies (Furlong, 2013; Roberts, 2009), it is important to note at the outset that this thesis focuses only upon youth (the majority of whom were self-defined as ‘White’) living at a particular stage of development in a highly unequal, neo-liberal and western society: Britain. It is thus acknowledged that the social situations, life circumstances and lived experiences recalled by students in the present study cannot be held to be representative of the life worlds of their counterparts living elsewhere, or of those who comprised non-white ethnic groups living in Britain. This will be addressed further in Chapter 3.

Thesis structure

Chapter 1 of this thesis provides a critical review of the existing literature which examines: patterns, trends and inequalities in sport participation among young people; the major continuities and changes in sport participation during times of transition (particularly in relation to education); and the significance of childhood sports socialization for present-day sport participation and the construction of young people’s sport careers. Starting from the assumption that it is only possible to adequately understand youth sport by locating it within the broader context of young people’s leisure and the life course more broadly, Chapter 2 then examines some of the broader changes in childhood and youth and their implications for young people’s engagement in leisure activities which compete with sport for their time, money and

attention. More particularly, the chapter examines: dominant conceptualizations of the life course and the processes involved in its de-standardization; the implications of the expansion of HE and changes in the labour market for young people's lives; and the social construction and composition of youth leisure careers and biographies. The key theoretical concepts and frameworks deployed in the sociological study of youth, and those which informed the analysis of data presented in this thesis, are then outlined before stating the main research questions which were identified on the basis of the existing body of knowledge.

The two methods used to generate relevant data for the study – structured and semi-structured interviews – are then outlined and justified in Chapter 3, which also explains how the study was undertaken and provides details of the sample of participants, and the process of data analysis. The results of the study are then presented in the next four chapters, which examine students' past (Chapter 4) and current (Chapter 5) participation in sport, and their previous participation in other leisure activities (Chapter 6) and how this related to their present-day leisure participation (Chapter 7). The sociological significance of the findings of the thesis are then discussed in Chapter 8, which provides the beginnings of an explanation for why those with HE qualifications are more likely to participate in sport while overall participation rates remain static. In doing so, the chapter examines the differences in students' sport and leisure participation before and during their time in HE; how these differences can be traced back to experiences in childhood, and particularly to processes of habitus formation and capital accumulation; and argues that to adequately understand students' present-day sport participation and sport careers

requires these to be located within students' broader leisure lifestyles and how these change during the life course.

The Conclusion reflects upon the ways in which the findings of the study help explain why the expansion of HE has not necessarily been associated with increases in sport participation among adults and youth in Britain. The limitations of the study and its implications for future work in the area are then considered. It is argued that if government and other organizations with an interest in the sport and leisure careers of young people (including university students) wish to maximize their future sport participation, then it is essential that they recognize the significance of childhood and family socialization as central ingredients in the development of sporting predispositions and habituses.

Note

¹ In this thesis, 'sport' will be used as a catch-all term intended to incorporate fitness and health-related exercise, less competitive exercise of the kind associated with the term 'lifestyle sports' (Coalter, 2007, 2013), as well as conventional sports, that are undertaken in spare time.

Chapter One

Youth Sport Participation, Education and Childhood Socialization

Introduction

The central objective of this chapter is to review the existing body of knowledge that addresses the complex relationships that exist between youth sport participation, education and the processes involved in family-based childhood sports socialization. It will focus, in particular, on the work which has explored theoretically and empirically: (i) patterns and trends in sport participation among young people; (ii) social inequalities in sport participation; (iii) sport participation during times of transition, particularly in relation to education; and (iv) the significance of childhood sports socialization and the construction of young people's sport careers.

Patterns and trends in sport participation

It was noted in the Introduction to this thesis that since the 1960s, in particular, there have been substantial policy and financial investments made by governments and other agencies in many countries intended to enhance sport participation among young people and adults. Indeed, increasing mass sport participation has become a central objective of much sport policy internationally (e.g. DCMS/Strategy Unit, 2002; Sport England, 2014a). The promotion of sport participation has also become a prominent feature of social and health policy internationally (Downward & Rasciute, 2011; Downward et al., 2014; Stuij & Stokvis, 2014; WHO, 2010), including in Britain (e.g. DHPAHIP, 2011; Public Health England, 2014), as 'the frequency and force with which citizens are urged to take part in physical activity and exercise in

order to improve their health and reduce morbidity and mortality rates has increased at an exponential rate' (Malcolm, 2014, p. 51).

Notwithstanding the well-documented health risks of participating in sport which have been reviewed in detail elsewhere (e.g. Malcolm, 2014; Waddington, 2000; Young, 2012), levels and rates of sport participation have nevertheless increased since the 1970s, particularly in Scandinavia. A study of Norwegian adult sport participation between 1985 and 2011, for example, revealed that 'there has been a clear shift in the population towards more activity during leisure time' (Breivik & Hellevik, 2014, p. 162), and especially among females since 2005, while in Denmark it has been argued that adult participation in 'sport and exercise has continuously increased ... for as long as surveys on leisure time activities have been carried out' (Fridberg, 2010, p. 583). In relation to Finland, Hardman and Stensel (2009, p. 12) have also noted that the 'proportion of both men and women engaging in high levels of leisure time physical activity has increased since 1972, as has the proportion of women participating at a moderate level'. They add that studies of the 'Finnish population overall confirm that participation in recreational physical activity has increased over the past two decades in young, working-age and elderly people' (Hardman & Stensel, 2009, p. 12). The trend towards increased sport participation has also been observed in relation to young people, especially in Europe (Downward & Rasciute, 2011; Downward et al., 2014) and including those in Flanders (Scheerder et al., 2005; Vandermeersch et al., 2014), Finland (Laakso et al., 2008), Norway (Breivik and Hellevik, 2014; Green et al., 2013), Sweden (Jakobsson et al., 2012), the Netherlands (van Bottenburg, 2010; Waardenburg & van Bottenburg, 2013) and Britain (Green, 2010; Roberts, forthcoming).

Despite the increases in sport participation among adults and young people from the 1970s, it has been argued that sport participation appears to have now reached a point of stagnation in many countries throughout Europe (Downward & Rasciute, 2011; Downward et al., 2014; Rowe, 2014; Sport England, 2014b), where the proportion of the population who engage in sport participation also varies quite substantially. For example, in a review of participation in the 27 European Union Member States in 2005, van Tuyckom and Scheerder (2010a, 2010b) reported that, on average, 61 per cent of Europeans were defined as ‘active participants’ in leisure-time physical activity during the previous seven days. The top five countries with the highest proportion of sport active citizens were: Finland (81 per cent), the Netherlands (77 per cent), Austria (76 per cent), Lithuania and Germany (both 75 per cent). This compared to just under six-in-ten respondents from the UK (57 per cent), while those countries with the fewest participants were Hungary (52 per cent), Greece (49 per cent), Malta (46 per cent), Romania (43 per cent) and Portugal (39 per cent) (van Tuyckom & Scheerder, 2010a, 2010b). In this regard, sport participation was said to decline when going from north to south in Europe, and that those ‘from more northern locations and from Scandinavian countries exceed their continental colleagues from the Mediterranean Sea area’ (van Tuyckom & Scheerder, 2010b, p. 308). In addition, Tuyckom and Scheerder (2010b, p. 308) noted that ‘East Europeans generally score less well with respect to leisure-time physical activity than West Europeans. The exceptions, however, are Slovenia and, to a lesser degree, the Czech Republic and Bulgaria’.

Social inequalities in sport participation

Despite the well-documented difficulties of comparing sport participation across

countries (Nicholson et al., 2011; van Bottenburg et al., 2005), Nicholson et al. (2011) have suggested that while social inequalities such as gender, social class, age, and ethnicity do not impact on participation uniformly, the social skewing in sport participation throughout Europe, North America, Africa, Asia, and Oceania are indeed closely associated with socially structured forms of inequality. In Europe, for example, the most likely sport participants are men, the young, those with higher socio-economic status, levels of education and income, and those living in large towns (van Tuyckom & Scheerder, 2010a, 2010b). In the UK, where levels of income inequality are especially wide and increasing (Dorling, 2014; Pickett & Wilkinson, 2015; Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010) and where the present study was conducted, sport participation has also been described as ‘becoming increasingly unequally distributed’ (Coalter, 2007, p. 64). The social distribution of sport participation among those aged 16 and over is particularly clear from successive sweeps of Sport England’s *Active People Survey*, which since it was first introduced in 2005/6 (Rowe, 2009) has consistently indicated that overall levels and frequency of participation declines continuously with age (especially for males), and is significantly related to social class, ethnicity, disability, and regional-level socio-economic deprivation (Houlihan, 2011; Rowe, 2009, 2015). The conclusions drawn by Delaney and Keaney (2005, p. 28) from their analysis of the Time Use Survey 2000 usefully summarise the major social differences in sport participation in the UK, which are said to be characterized by:

- A steep age effect with older respondents being substantially less likely to participate than younger respondents.
- A pronounced gender effect with women being substantially less likely to

participate than men.

- Some evidence of regional effects with those in high unemployment areas being less likely to participate.
- Pronounced income effects, with those on higher incomes being significantly more likely to participate.
- Pronounced ethnicity effects, with those from ethnic minorities being significantly less likely to participate
- Pronounced education effects, with those with an A-Level or Degree being significantly more likely to participate than those with less education.

The impact of education on sport participation will be reviewed in more detail later, but gender and social class have persistently been identified as being among the major sources of social division that impact on sport participation by young people and adults, not only in Britain (e.g. Coalter, 2013; Rowe, 2014; Warde, 2006; Widdop & Cutts, 2013), but also throughout Europe (e.g. van Bottenburg et al., 2005; van Tuyckom & Scheerder, 2010a, 2010b) and beyond (e.g. Haase et al., 2004; Irwin, 2004). Although gender differences in sport participation are less marked in the Nordic countries, and in Norway women are more likely to participate at least once each week than men (e.g. Fridberg, 2010; Green et al., 2013), in Britain fewer women than men have historically participated in sport and women typically engage in a narrower range of sports (e.g. Rowe, 2014; Warde, 2006; Widdop & Cutts, 2013). Indeed, the most recently available data from Sport England's (2014b) *Active People Survey* indicate that, between April 2013 and April 2014, 35.5 per cent of the adult population (aged 16 and above) participated at least once in 30 minutes of moderate intensity sport, but more males (41 per cent) did so compared to females (30 per cent).

Those in the managerial and professional classes were also more likely to participate at least once per week (43 per cent) compared to those in the intermediate class (34 per cent), small employers/own account workers (33 per cent), and the lowest ranked social groups (25 per cent) (Sport England, 2014b). Adults aged 16-25 (55 per cent) and who reported no life-limiting disability (39 per cent) were also more likely to participate than those 26-years-old and above (18 per cent) and disabled people (18 per cent), respectively, while no differences were observed in the participation of White British (36 per cent) and Black and minority ethnic groups (36 per cent) (Sport England, 2014b). Reporting on the findings of the 2005 *Cultural Capital and Social Exclusion* (CCSE) survey, Warde (2006, p. 115) has also claimed that, in Britain, gender is ‘the most powerful discriminating variable’ which helps explain ‘differential preferences for particular sports’, with those in white-collar occupations being more likely to use a gym. Men were also over-represented in sports such as football and golf and were more likely to do a wider range of activities than females (Warde, 2006). Consistent with the observations of others (e.g. Bennett et al., 2010), Warde (2006, p. 119) also noted that ‘the main general effect of class appears in terms not of the symbolic identity of particular sports, but in the propensity to participate actively. The likelihood of claiming to participate in sport and the frequency with which people take exercise are strongly correlated with occupational class position’. As the next section indicates, these class-related changes in participation are also associated with the broader life transitions undertaken by people throughout the life course. Before examining the significance of life transitions, however, it is worth noting Coalter’s (2013, p. 5) observation that, overall, studies of sport participation in the UK have:

exhibited consistent correlations with aspects of social structure such [as] sex, level of education, age and social class. Even in times of increasing aggregate participation, the relationships between the rates of participation of these social groups remained relatively constant. An appropriate metaphor might be an escalator – although all were moving up, the relationship between the various steps on the escalator remained relatively constant – this applied both when participation was increasing and decreasing.

Given the persistence of such socially structured and consistent correlations, Coalter (2013, p. 18) also noted that sport participation might be regarded as ‘epiphenomenal, a secondary set of social practices dependent on and reflecting more fundamental structures, values and processes’ associated with social inequalities in the wider society. More particularly, in contrast to conventional analyses of participation data, which often fail to consider the implications of understanding the relationships between forms of social inequality and leisure-sport participation, it might be argued that various aspects of inequality typically precede such participation (Coalter, 2013). Indeed, it would appear that many of the roots of inequalities in sport participation undertaken in leisure contexts are most likely to be found within the structure of the wider society, where ‘the scale of material inequalities ... (provides) the skeleton, or framework, round which class and cultural differences are formed’ (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2010, p. 28).

Sport participation and life transitions

The impact of various social inequalities (particularly social class) is compounded, to a greater or lesser degree, by major life events and socially structured life-transitions

that characterize the life-course and which have consistently been shown to impact on participation in a range of sport and leisure activities (Engberg et al., 2012; Kwan et al., 2012; Lamb et al., 1988; Lunn et al., 2013; Rapoport and Rapoport, 1975; Roberts & Brodie, 1992). In their four-year longitudinal study involving 4,554 adults from six regions in the UK, Roberts and Brodie (1992, p. 37-38), for example, noted that although drop-out from leisure-sport participation 'occurs in all age groups ... the heaviest drop-out is in youth and young adulthood', and many people fail to participate at all, or on a regular basis, thereafter (see also Scheerder et al., 2005; Telama & Yang, 2000). This drop-out, the changing nature of participation, and the activities undertaken during the transition from youth to young adulthood, were strongly related to the individualization of people's overall lifestyles and to their current life-stages (Roberts & Brodie, 1992). Team games, for example, were popular until the end of statutory schooling when participation in these activities became no longer organizationally convenient. Many more adults who remained in sport instead began to undertake more flexible, partner and individually-orientated sports (e.g. squash and badminton) and 'lifestyle activities' (e.g. swimming and multi-gym) that could be accommodated within broader changes in their leisure lifestyles and were more likely to survive the transition into young adulthood (Roberts & Brodie, 1992). In contrast to those whose participation lapsed altogether in conjunction with an increasing engagement in home-based and health-threatening leisure, adults who experienced undisrupted leisure-sport careers did so 'largely as a result of experiences in sport during childhood and youth' (Roberts & Brodie, 1992, p. 41). More specifically, Roberts and Brodie (1992, p. 42) noted that the main characteristic that distinguished adults' early sport socialization and continued participation 'was the number of different sports that they had played regularly and in which they became

proficient during childhood and youth'; that is to say, adults who engaged in one or more sports during every year from age 16 to 30 continued to play regularly up to at least age 35 and their entire leisure-sport careers were less vulnerable to disruption (Roberts & Brodie, 1992).

The development of what Roberts and Brodie (1992) termed 'wide sporting repertoires' during childhood and youth was strongly related to gender, with males being more likely to engage in leisure-sport, spend more time when doing so, to continue participating at a later age, and to have more continuous leisure-sport careers than women. Roberts and Brodie (1992, p. 60) also observed that social class 'makes its most decisive impact on sports participation during the critical life-stages of childhood, youth and young adulthood', with those from the middle classes being more likely to continue participating during adulthood. Thus, unless leisure-sport had been adopted during and survived the major life phases preceding adulthood, then adults were unlikely to restructure their leisure to accommodate, or revive, their participation, and 'the greater the number of life events that individuals experienced ... the greater their likelihood of *increasing* their participation in non-sporting leisure' (Roberts and Brodie, 1992, p. 69; original emphasis).

In a more recent study of 3,080 adults (aged 18+) in Ireland, Lunn (2010) argued that life course changes in participation can be represented by the 'sports hill', where there is an identifiable kink in participation at age 11 that reaches a peak at age 15, before falling off sharply during the late teenage years, followed by a 'decline throughout adulthood which is steeper in earlier adulthood and shallower in middle age' (Lunn, 2010, p. 713). In this regard, Lunn (2010, p. 714) suggested that 'participation as a

child and as a young adult appears to be strongly related to transitions into and out of educational institutions’, with transitions into and out of participation occurring more steadily after age 20. The changes in adults’ participation also varied according to the kinds of sports undertaken, with team sports accounting for the peak in participation and then the steep decline observed at age 15, while engagement in individual activities did not peak until age 20 and declined far more gradually (Lunn, 2010). Sex-related differences in adults’ leisure-sport careers were also evident, with females being more likely than males to take up team sports later, towards the beginning of secondary school, before quickly dropping out again by the end of compulsory schooling. These differences in participation were much narrower for individual activities, which were undertaken by substantial numbers of males and females who were much less likely to drop out of these activities than more team-oriented sports. These sex-related inequalities in participation varied over the life course, however, ‘widening in young adulthood, narrowing in the 30s, then widening again’ (Lunn, 2010, p. 714) with age. The impact of social class (as measured by educational attainment separately, and when combined with income) was also significant; those who had higher educational attainment and income reported much higher participation rates during late adolescence, especially for individual activities, and were more likely to be active during adulthood than those lower down the social ladder (Lunn, 2010).

Similar conclusions about the significance of life transitions for making sense of changes in sport participation over the life course were drawn in a more recent study of sport participation in Ireland, which reported that whether ‘people remain active across their lifetimes is not primarily determined by whether they are active as

children, but by transitions that occur as they grow up, mature and progress through adulthood’ (Lunn et al., 2013, p. ix). In other words, as Lunn et al. (2013, p. ix) have noted, ‘the overall level of participation in sport and physical exercise among the population of Ireland is not determined by how active our children are, important though that is, but by what happens to them as they progress through life’.

But what do the available data suggest about the impact of one key source of social division – educational attainment – that is said to be ‘a particularly strong and enduring determinant of participation’ (Lunn, 2010, p. 717) in sport and of trajectories in life transitions? And what contribution do other divisions, particularly gender and social class, make to the sporting portfolios of those who remain in full-time education after compulsory schooling? These issues are explored in more detail next.

Sport participation and higher education

The assumed relationship between sport participation and attending higher education has been investigated previously in several countries (Coalter, 2013; Farrell et al., 2014; Lunn et al., 2013; van Bottenburg et al., 2005; van Tuyckom & Scheerder, 2010a), not least because participation has been shown to decrease ‘significantly between adolescence and adulthood, the age range of most university students’ (Irwin, 2004, p. 928). A central finding of these investigations has been that ‘those most likely to participate in sport are from the higher socio-economic groups and have stayed in education after the minimum school-leaving age’ (Coalter, 2007, p. 48; see also Delaney & Keaney, 2005; Gidlow et al., 2006; Lunn et al., 2013). This is said to be particularly true throughout Europe for, as van Tuyckom and Scheerder (2010a, p. 503) have noted, in 2005 69 per cent of those who completed their education after the

age of 21 in European Member States were currently sports-active compared to 39 per cent of those who did so before age 15. Other studies of European sport participation have confirmed the observation that those with higher levels of education are more likely to be sports-active, including in Norway (Breivik & Hellevik, 2014), and in Denmark where 71 per cent of current sport participants were university-educated compared to just under one-half (48 per cent) of those who left education aged 16 (Fridberg, 2010). Overall, these data are indicative of what Lunn et al. (2013, p. 97) refer to as ‘the sporting advantage associated with staying on longer in full-time education’.

Although levels of sport participation are typically higher amongst students of HE, they do however vary according to gender. For example, as Haase et al. (2004) concluded from their questionnaire study of leisure-time physical activity amongst 19,298 students (aged 17-30-years-old) attending a non-representative sample of universities in 23 countries, males were statistically more likely to be active sports participants and females as currently inactive in 16 of the countries surveyed. However, inactivity and active participation varied widely between countries: ‘ranging from 11% (Belgium) to 41% (Portugal and South Africa) among men, and from 15% (USA) to 65% (Portugal) among women’ (Haase et al., 2004, p. 184). Overall, levels of inactivity were said to be ‘lowest in North-Western Europe and the United States, and highest in developing countries’ (Haase et al., 2004, p. 185), while the prevalence of leisure-time activity of any frequency was ‘generally higher in more economically developed countries, with the exception of Mediterranean countries’ (Haase et al., 2004, p. 187). The prevalence of recommended activity (defined as participating three or more times per week) by males and females also did not ‘differ

between North-Western Europe and the United States, Central and Eastern Europe, and Mediterranean countries' (Haase et al., 2004, p. 185). Overall, Haase et al. (2004: 187) concluded that 'there is a broad association between the economic development stage of countries and leisure-time physical activity, coupled with specific cultural and geopolitical determinants', but that explanations for these are unclear.

In another review of 19 studies (published between 1985 and 2001) of university students (from 27 countries, including Australia, Canada, China, Nigeria, United States, and 21 European countries) who met the American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) recommended guidelines of 30 minutes or more of moderate physical activity on most, if not all, days of the week for health benefit, Irwin (2004) reported that approximately one-half (or more) of Canadian, American and Chinese university students studied did not engage in sufficient physical activity for health benefit. In Australia, 40 per cent of students were categorized as insufficiently physically active compared to two-thirds (67 per cent) in Europe, and in Nigeria virtually no students were said to engage in any physical activity (Irwin, 2004). Female students, and especially African Americans, were also more likely to be insufficiently active than university men, while those living on-campus were at greater risk of being physically inactive than those living off-campus (Irwin, 2004).

In relation to the participation of university students in England (Table 1.1), where the research reported in this thesis was conducted, data from Sport England's APS suggest that participation by HE students has remained largely unchanged between 2009 and 2013, with approximately one-half of university students participating at least once per week in sport and with few age-related differences again being

observed (Sport England, 2013). A complementary investigation of sport participation among students (n=37,163) involved in Sport England's *Active Universities* programme also revealed that, in 2012/13, two-thirds of students (67 per cent; 71 per cent males, 63 per cent females) participated in sport for at least 30 minutes on one or more of the 28 days prior to the survey. Over one half of students (57 per cent) did so once per week on average, and one-third (34 per cent; 41 per cent males, 29 per cent females) did so on three occasions for 30 minutes per week (TNS-BMRB, 2013). In each case, the proportion of students participating in sport was two per cent higher than in the previous year, with the least active groups being women, older students, disabled students and Black and Asian students (TNS-BMRB, 2013). In terms of the sports in which students reported participating for at least 30 minutes on one or more of the 28 days prior to the survey, visiting a gymnasium was the most popular activity (20 per cent), followed by running and jogging (14 per cent), aerobics/fitness classes (8 per cent), cycling (8 per cent), and weight training (7 per cent) (TNS-BMRB, 2013).

Of those students who participated in the 2012/13 survey, one-third (34 per cent) used university sports provision. Notably, however, 10 per cent of students reported participating using university sport provisions only, 24 per cent used both university and non-university facilities, while the majority (39 per cent) of participants engaged in sport off campus in non-university provision (TNS-BMRB, 2013). Those living in university halls on campus (23 per cent) or off campus (15 per cent) were most likely to use university provisions for their participation (23 per cent), one-in-ten (11 per cent) of those renting privately used university sports provision, with just two per cent of those living at their permanent address doing so (TNS-BMRB, 2013). When asked

about the reasons for not using university sport provision, over one-half (53 per cent) reported that these facilities were less convenient than local facilities, two-in-ten students cited cost (20 per cent) or a lack of appropriate activities or opportunities to participate (18 per cent), while approximately one-in-ten felt that it was difficult to get involved in university sport (12 per cent) or that university sports contexts were not sufficiently welcoming to encourage participation (9 per cent) (TNS-BMRB, 2013). Amongst the non-sport participants, a lack of time because of work or study commitments (75 per cent), time spent doing other preferred leisure activities (39 per cent), cost (29 per cent), and family commitments (14 per cent) were cited as the main barriers to participation (TNS-BMRB, 2013).

Table 1.1. Sport participation at least once per week (%) since 2009

Sector (Age)	APS 4 (2009/10)	APS 5 (2010/2011)	APS 6 (2011/2012)	APS 7 Q2 (2012/2013)
HE (Overall)	N/A	51.1	52.0	52.0
HE (16-19)	53.7	61.9	56.4	58.9
HE (20-25)	54.8	56.9	56.5	57.9
HE (16-25)	54.4	58.3	56.4	58.2
Full-Time (Overall)	42.2	40.4	42.8	42.4
Full-Time (16-19)	57.1	55.5	56.9	59.6
Full-Time (20-25)	58.4	56.6	57.6	56.0
Full-Time (16-25)	58.2	56.4	57.5	56.6

Reporting on the findings of the CCSE survey referred to earlier, Warde (2006, p. 110) has argued that compared to gender and age, educational experience ‘is much more significant’ in predicting the propensity to engage in sport in Britain. In particular, Warde (2006, p. 110) observed that ‘73 per cent of those with a degree do

some form of sport, compared to 66 per cent of those with A-levels, 62 per cent of those with an HND or equivalent, 59 per cent of those with GCSEs, and 32 per cent of those with no qualifications'. These data thus indicated that 'the more advanced the educational qualification by the respondent, the more likely they are to participate in a sport ... someone with a degree is, all other factors taken into account, almost four times more likely than someone without any qualifications to engage in a sport' (Warde, 2006, p. 110). Drawing upon APS data from mid-October 2007-2010, Downward and Rasciute (2014) have also concluded that in England higher levels of education not only help increase intensity of participation among males, but also 'play a stronger role in developing female tastes for sport' (Downward & Rasciute, 2014, p. 8) and in increasing their propensity for participation. This appears to be particularly important for, as Kwan et al. (2012, p. 18) have noted in relation to Canadian students, it is not uncommon that

men who transitioned into a college/university are among those most susceptible to the steepest declines [in physical activity]. Conversely, women entering post-secondary education ... [are] far less active than their male counterparts during adolescence. It is possible that girls experience the greatest declines in physical activity prior to adolescence.

Overall, it is clear from the findings of several studies that the longer people (especially young women and middle-class youth) stay in full-time education, the more likely they are to participate in sport and the less likely they are to drop out in the future (Coalter, 2013; Coalter et al., 1995; Lunn et al., 2013). According to Coalter (2013, p. 12), this is related to the tendency for those in full-time education to

have free time, be provided with accessible opportunities for free or highly subsidized participation in a wide range of sports and mix with peers who are sports participants. This longer period of 'independence' permits the development of a longer term commitment to participation as a lifestyle choice and the willingness and ability to protect it in the face of subsequent work and relationship demands.

Warde (2006) has also argued that some HE institutions often develop a taste for sport among their students because of their particular sporting histories, reputations and traditions which are locally accorded prestige. Some educational institutions, Warde (2006, p. 121) adds, also provide 'additional opportunities to learn to play games, and a range of games, as a function of facilities and curriculum design ... and ... longer exposure to sporting activity and facilities [which] retains interest further through the life course'.

In policy terms, the provision of and satisfaction with university sports facilities might be important for female students especially if, as Downward and Rasciute (2014) have noted, the current imbalance in the provision of local authority facilities where grass pitches, which are thought to be more attractive to males and team sports players, continue to significantly out number other facilities (e.g. swimming pools, gymnasias) that are often more attractive to females. The alleged importance of sports facilities for students' sport participation has, however, been questioned by other studies outside the UK. For example, in a study of 2,729 Australian university students, Leslie et al. (1999) revealed that students' awareness of campus-based facilities for sport and physical activity was not significantly associated with their propensity to be

sufficiently physically active for health benefit, and that the existence of sports facilities seemed less important than other modifiable factors such as self-efficacy, social support and enjoyment. It was also suggested that sports-active students ‘may choose to exercise in other settings or environments, which may also be more convenient and attractive to use’ (Leslie et al., 1999, p. 25), but that beyond students’ awareness of university sports facilities, other aspects of campus provision ‘need to be studied, including attractiveness of facilities, convenience of programs, and barriers to use’, if their importance for participation is to be better understood. Another study of 601 sports-active Canadian university students also emphasized students’ preference for using campus facilities that enabled them to engage in relatively informal, flexible and self-organized activity (Burke et al., 2006). In particular, for both aerobic exercise and weight training, exercising with others outside of a structured university setting was the preferred context of participation for the majority of students. Exercising alone in university sports settings was the least preferred activity context for women, while male students least preferred engaging in structured facility-based sessions for aerobic exercise and weight training. Thus, for university sports provisions to make a meaningful impact on students’ propensity for sport participation, the presence of mutually supportive friends in those settings was especially important for females, whereas for male students the avoidance of time-bound, highly structured and formalized, classes was vital in promoting participation (Burke et al., 2006). As the next section indicates, this would appear particularly important for students’ engagement in increasingly popular do-it-yourself lifestyle activities which can be undertaken when they want, with whom they want, and how they want, and are much more popular than club-based sport which is usually undertaken by a committed minority of participants (Coalter, 2007; Green, 2014; Roberts, 1996).

Club sport and the individualization of participation

As the findings of many studies have suggested (e.g. Coakley, 2011; Coalter, 2007, 2013; Collins, 2005; Kay & Spaaij, 2012), the structure and culture of sports clubs can have a significant impact on the participation of young people in sport and exercise, and can simultaneously be experienced positively and negatively by sport participants who engage in them (Coalter, 2007; Haudenhuyse et al., 2014). This is particularly important because in many countries (especially in Europe) much youth sport is organised by, and occurs within, sports clubs which are frequently regarded in public policy as important mechanisms for promoting sport participation (Haudenhuyse et al., 2014; Laakso et al., 2008; Vandermeersch et al., 2014), and for developing forms of social capital – whether bonding (between ‘people like us’), bridging (with ‘people not like us’), or linking (with others, usually higher up the social scale, achieved by social mobility) social capital (Coalter, 2013; Collins, 2005; Delaney & Keaney, 2005). Sports clubs do, however, vary including in the sports and participants represented, with those in Germany, the Netherlands and Scandinavia being more likely to be multi-sport in nature and attracting a diverse range of participants (Coalter, 2013; Collins, 2005). By contrast, in Britain and France, most clubs are said to be ‘small, single-sport, entities’ (Collins, 2005, p. 106) which typically attract people with similar interests and are more homogenous than in other European countries (Collins, 2005). The membership of sports clubs has also been shown to be higher in Britain compared to other European countries (Delaney & Keaney, 2005), and many are often biased towards the professional and managerial groups who are drawn disproportionately from the higher social classes (Coalter, 2007; Collins, 2005; Delaney & Keaney, 2005).

Club-based sport is thus frequently undertaken by a minority of committed participants who may benefit from the degree to which clubs facilitate or limit the development of forms of social capital.

As Collins (2005, p. 107) has noted, however, ‘being a member of an arts group, sports or interest club is not of itself evidence of producing social capital’; indeed, sports clubs are very often seen as ‘being mutual self-help entities, autonomous and substantially consuming what they have themselves produced’ (Collins, 2005, p. 108). In this regard, Collins (2005, p. 109) suggests that sports clubs *per se* are often regarded as being better able to develop bonding capital, rather than other forms of capital, because their ‘subcultures are strong and [they] attract likeminded and sometimes similar people’. It is also the case that the people who constitute sports clubs ‘may bring in friends but make few via the club, and have little interest in wider issues, even in the local community, let alone nationally’ (Collins, 2005, p. 109). Thus, theoretically at least, ‘bridging and linking activities would be expected to be fewer and weaker’ (Collins, 2005, p. 109), and dominant forms of bonding capital may help to limit entry to, and participation in, sports clubs by those who are excluded from them for whatever reasons (Coalter, 2013; Collins, 2005).

The growing appeal of more so-called lifestyle activities (such as attending a gym) is one key aspect of the changing nature of sport participation over the last three decades. Indeed, as the findings of studies in many countries have revealed, there has been a general tendency for people to move away from club-organized sports towards a preference for more recreational and individualized activities (Fridberg, 2010; Green, 2014; Vandermeersch et al., 2014; Warde, 2006; Wright et al., 2003),

especially by the end of compulsory education (Coalter, 2007, 2013; Eime et al., 2013; Lunn et al., 2013). Engagement in more flexible and potentially recreational forms of participation has emerged correlatively with increased concern about health and fitness (Bennett et al., 2010; Coalter, 2007, 2013; Warde, 2006), and a preference for activities that enable participants to pursue body maintenance and cultivation strategies linked to the presentation of desired body images to others (Dworkin & Wachs, 2009; Widdop et al., 2014). As Warde (2006: 120) has noted, the relationship between HE, engagement in more individualized and fitness-oriented activities, and concerns with body image and surveillance can be summarised thus:

Higher education and extensive physical activity for the purposes of body maintenance go together; there is a general consistency between manifestations of institutionalized and embodied cultural capital. The educated middle class adopt a distinctive attitude towards exercise, seeing it almost as duty to assume a personal responsibility for taking care of the body. This appears especially among people in professional occupations within a discourse of fitness. Of course, sport and exercise not only have a part to play in general maintenance of a healthy body; they also affect appearance and play a role in presentation of self and self-identity ... Bodies continue to display the insignia of unequal possession of cultural capital.

The ways in which some students engage in the maintenance of health, via gym-going as a form of self-cultivation, was made clear in Dworkin's (2003) ethnographic study of a university gym in the United States (US). Dworkin (2003, p. 132) argued that the mixed-gender gym, and especially the weights room, was a 'male terrain' given the

number of men who often attended, and how the space was occupied and used. Many of the women in Dworkin's (2003, p. 137) study avoided the weights room, which was often said to 'buzz from talking, laughing, grunts, and the clanging or swishing of weights and weight machines' used by men, preferring instead to exercise in aerobic/cardiovascular settings, often whilst listening to music. This enabled women to avoid males' domination of space, the intimidating practices of male (and some female) users, mask their lack of knowledge of equipment and routines, and avoid stigma associated with, among other things, seeking to build and reveal muscle, strength and power to other gym-goers.

According to Dworkin (2003, p. 147), one of the principal reasons commonly offered for why women self-monitored in this way was to avoid being rejected on what she calls 'the heterosexual dating market' in which approval from the 'male gaze' was thought to be of particular concern, especially on university campuses 'where an active social life may overdetermine one's social status, quality of life and self-esteem' (Dworkin, 2003, p. 147). The ethnographic insights from Dworkin's study, however, suggested that the internalization of gazes was not so straight-forward. Indeed, it was suggested that not all women (regardless of their sexuality) 'are trying to satisfy a male gaze; some women desire to satisfy only a female gaze, and some desire to satisfy both' (Dworkin, 2003, p. 148), with popular ideological conceptions of heterosexual femininity in particular being as much as, if not more, powerful than the beliefs of men (Dworkin, 2003).

Despite drawing attention to the important ways in which females may be subject to the 'male gaze' in university gym settings, Dworkin (2003) failed to account for how

men (of whatever sexuality) might be subject to the 'female gaze' and how, as with women, they respond variously to the ideological and cultural constraints to which they are subject. That women also at times engage in the gaze of male users of gyms was, however, evident in Crossley's (2006) ethnographic fieldwork of a health club in Greater Manchester. Crossley (2006, p. 38) argued that whilst heterosexual men were 'the most obvious and overt users of the ogling motive, sometimes provoking parodies from women', the women whom he observed also 'made reference to their own forms of ogling and some members of both sexes acknowledged using the gym like a dating agency'. In addition, Pridgeon and Grogan's (2012) study of gym-users, aged 19-32, in a working-class town elsewhere in the UK similarly concluded that the gym culture they studied was characterized by competition, which for male weight trainers especially motivated them to lift the heaviest weights, to assert their male dominance, and to reinforce their personal identities and secure social status among their peers. This highly masculinized and sexualized environment did not, however, appear to dissuade the females who exercised there and adhered to the programme they were following and for whom, like their male peers, exercise had become habitual (Pridgeon & Grogan, 2012). Indeed, these females appeared to enjoy the social interactions with men and regarded the gym as 'an accepting and supportive environment to exercise with friends and they felt part of the group membership' (Pridgeon & Grogan, 2012, p. 389). The non-adherers, both male and female, had mixed experiences and interpretations of this gym culture; for some, it contributed (together with other experiences including being aware of the gaze of others and self-consciousness) to them dropping out of the exercise programme, while for others it acted as a source of motivation, enjoyment and social support (Pridgeon & Grogan, 2012).

Beyond the alleged sexual motivations for attending university gymnasias, other studies have emphasized the ways in which some students engage in body-image-oriented activities for other motivations. Reporting on questionnaire data generated by 153 Australian 18-35-year-old undergraduates who either exercised at a university gym, or were psychology students who participated in the study for course credit, Strelan and Hargreaves (2005) noted that males were significantly more likely than women to exercise for health and fitness, but that there was no difference between men or women in doing so for appearance-related reasons and for mood/enjoyment. Female undergraduates, however, reported significantly higher levels of self-objectification, and significantly lower levels of body esteem, while their male counterparts who exercised for appearance-related reasons were more likely to report lower body esteem, and men who engaged in self-objectification were more likely to exercise for appearance enhancement reasons (Strelan & Hargreaves, 2005). Male students' concerns about body image, and with muscularity and weight (whether too much or too little), were also evident in a study of male undergraduates in the US, Ukraine and Ghana (Fredrick et al., 2007). Most men in the study wanted to be thinner and idealized muscular male bodies, which they related to their desire for 'being more attractive to women and being more successful in male-male competitions, as well as reasons related to feeling healthier, stronger, and more confident' (Fredrick et al., 2007, p. 110). Negative body talk in men was also associated with drive for muscularity, eating disordered behaviour, and appearance investment among a sample of 62 male students aged 18-24 who attended one mid-western university in the US (Engeln et al., 2013). Many of these male students 'reported significant muscularity-focused talk' (Engeln et al., 2013, p. 304), especially in relation to abdominals, chest, and arms, and often focused on a lack of muscularity

in addition to or instead of the presence of body fat. Thus, as Adams et al. (2005) also noted in their study of 18-32-year-olds, male gym-users' self-perceptions, and how they perceive others see them, is crucial to understanding the ways in which they regard their appearance as communicating something about their masculinity and sexual attractiveness to others, and how they feel about themselves.

In these and other respects, the experiences of undergraduate students are not dissimilar to those commonly reported by other (often young) users of health and fitness settings to engage in a range of self-monitoring body surveillance activities which are often taken up during the teenage years. For example, in their study of 714 12-16-year-olds attending four co-educational secondary schools in Australia, Slater and Tiggemann (2011) reported that while males were more likely to participate in organized sport, more females engaged in fitness-based activities such as running, walking and swimming, as well as exercise at a gym. However, the propensity for more women to exercise at a gym was not an unalloyed blessing, for they 'showed higher levels of body shame and disordered eating symptomatology than girls who did not exercise at a gym, a finding consistent with studies of adult women' (Slater and Tiggemann, 2011, p. 461). This was associated, they argued, with the tendency for the objectifying gym environment to include 'many features that are likely to elevate body dissatisfaction (e.g. full-length mirrors, posters of ideal female bodies, wearing of tight and revealing exercise clothing)' (Slater & Tiggemann, 2011, p. 461), opportunities for direct comparison with other women, and the presence of males observing them exercise (see also Prichard & Tiggemann, 2005). Having weight-related motives for sport participation also had several negative associations with body image, dieting behaviors and self-esteem among a sample of 140 13-18-

year-old Dutch females (de Bruin et al., 2009). Even when controlling for actual body composition and age, participants in weight-related sports were more likely to perceive themselves as being fat, were more dissatisfied with their body figure, and perceived their body (but not their face) as less attractive than other participants and non-participants. They also ‘reported higher dieting frequency, used more weight control and purging methods, and had lower self-esteem’ (de Bruin et al., 2009, p. 634).

Summary: sport participation

Thus far this chapter has reviewed the existing literature on sport participation, the social inequalities evident in patterns and trends of youth and adult engagement in sport, and especially the ways in which those who attend HE are more likely to be present-day participants and remain sports-active into later life than those who leave education once they reach the minimum school-leaving age. It has become clear, however, that despite increases in sport participation since the 1970s – which in the UK was facilitated initially by a sustained period of investment in local authority sports facilities, and then substantial investment by successive governments in a plethora of policy interventions – youth and adult sport participation rates remain relatively static (Coalter, 2013; Rowe, 2009, 2015). Indeed, despite all the interventions and programmes intended to boost participation, the increased social and cultural significance of sport, and an increasingly supportive political policy context alongside other favourable trends, including the expansion of HE (since the 1980s), but also the growth of the middle-class, higher incomes (pre-2008), and a healthier population (Roberts, 2014; Rowe, 2014), participation rates remain

stubbornly resistant to change. As Rowe (2015: 43) has noted in relation to England, this might lead one to ask:

Why is it that some people become committed lifelong sport participants while others drop out from sport in their teens never to return to an active lifestyle? Why has over 40 years of public policy in sport in England, accompanied by substantial investment, struggled to ‘shift the curve’ of participation, reduce dropout and achieve sustained growth?

In the context of the present study, the flat-lining in sport participation rates also leads one to question whether engaging in HE does indeed help to explain why university students are more likely to become present-day participants and remain sports-active into later life, or whether other social processes help to account for the observed differences in participation between university students and other social groups. In the absence of much convincing empirical evidence, definitive conclusions to these questions cannot yet be drawn and further research, such as that presented in this thesis, is needed to examine whether there is a ‘HE effect’ on sport participation and, if so, what this effect/these effects are.

The authors of one study have tentatively suggested that although social class and length of time spent in education are thought to make an independent difference to present-day participation rates and the construction of longer-term sport careers, the extent to which they do so may ‘depend on predispositions that have been formed earlier in life, and the standard predisposition within a sociodemographic group will explain the rate change – whether overall this is upwards or downwards’ (Birchwood

et al., 2008, p. 284). Indeed, in a study of the leisure sport careers of 31-37-year-olds in the three South Caucasus countries, Birchwood et al. (2008, p. 291) argued that current students' and graduates' higher rates of sport participation prior to entering university could not be attributed to a 'HE effect'. Instead, since HE graduates had higher rates of participation compared to non-university students before they enrolled at university, the length of time spent in education (at least at university) could not adequately explain differences in sport participation. In fact, as students progressed through their studies in HE, the difference between their sport participation and those of non-graduates narrowed, rather than widened, as might be expected while participation among graduates declined more steeply from age 16 than non-graduates (Birchwood et al., 2008). These observations led Birchwood et al. (2008, p. 291) to hypothesize that

unlike in the South Caucasus, there will be a direct higher education effect on sport participation in countries where sport provisions in universities are more generous, of a higher standard, and where sport plays a more prominent role in student lifestyles than in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, where students have remained home-based whenever possible and where universities have been and remain more narrowly academic institutions than in most western countries, especially the UK and North America.

In addition, they commented that although 'more generous western provisions may trigger higher sport participation' (Birchwood et al., 2008, p. 291), the major source of differences in participation was related to 'a distinct and enduring propensity to play sport [that] is acquired during childhood via a culture transmitted by the family',

which is relatively independent of the social class of families, and that the propensity to play sport is similar to the propensity acquired to progress through HE. In this regard, they suggested that even though university sports provisions may generate independent effects on rates of participation, this is only likely to be observed among students who are appropriately predisposed to do so (Birchwood et al., 2008). It was the cultural dimensions of family environments which were identified as being the crucial source of young adults' predispositions to take part in sport, and which helped sustain the unequal propensities to participate over the life course (Birchwood et al., 2008). These predispositions, they argued, were relatively fixed by age 16, were relatively independent of the social class of families, and were largely 'a product of childhood socialization in the family' (Birchwood et al., 2008, p. 293). Thus, it was concluded that even though more generous university sports provisions may generate independent effects on rates of participation, this is only likely to be observed among students who are appropriately predisposed to do so and who benefitted from childhood sport socialization during family leisure (Birchwood et al., 2008).

More recently, Rowe (2015) has also drawn attention to the ways in which people who are invested differently with different amounts and kinds of sporting capital can help explain observed differences in sport participation, including between HE students and those who do not attend university, while other studies have argued that childhood is the critical life-stage in which predispositions for sport participation are formed in the context of family leisure (e.g. Parry, 2013; Pot et al., 2014; Quarmby & Dagkas, 2010, 2013; Stuij, 2013). Some of these issues are examined in more detail in the next section which explores: (i) the ways in which family leisure is a crucial site for the construction of sport and non-sport careers; and (ii) some of the social

processes associated with the formation of sporting habituses during childhood that help generate unequal predispositions towards sport participation in later life.

Family leisure and childhood sport socialization: gender and social class

One of the most notable findings of leisure research since the publication of Rapoport and Rapoport's (1975) classic study in the 1970s, in particular, has been the identification of family life and the home as important leisure sites in which parents engage with their children (Harrington, 2013; Kay, 2009a, 2009b; Roberts, 2006). Drawing on their study of 31 Canadian families, Shaw and Dawson (2001, p. 228), for example, argued that 'family leisure should be seen as a form of purposive leisure, which is planned, facilitated, and executed by parents in order to achieve particular short- and long-term goals'. These goals, they argued, generally fall into two main categories: (i) the improvement of family functioning, positive interaction (emotionally and psychologically) and communication among family members to enhance family cohesion based on a strong sense of family unity; and (ii) the use of family leisure to instil among children desired moral values and behaviours (such as the adoption of healthy lifestyles) that would prepare them for their lives as adults (Shaw & Dawson, 2001). In this regard, Shaw and Dawson (2001) claimed that parents often purposively use family leisure as a means of fulfilling their parental obligations by engaging in, and often organizing, physically active pursuits to benefit their children (especially in health and fitness terms), rather than themselves (see also Harrington, 2009, 2013; Kay, 2009a; Shaw, 2008).

Although many parents are thought to value purposive leisure as a key goal of family leisure because it 'provides a social context for transmitting their values, interests and

a sense of who we are as a family' (Harrington, 2013, p. 237), Harrington (2009, 2013) argues that the concept fails to adequately account for the gendered identities and leisure repertoires parents bring to their family leisure practices. Furthermore, she adds that purposive leisure is a uniform concept that 'does not account for how family leisure may be mediated by class, ethnicity, religion and other cultural processes' (Harrington, 2013, p. 237) and thus underplays the significance of social contexts and relationships in structuring the use of leisure among families.

To overcome some of the difficulties associated with the concept of purposive leisure, other studies have provided a more complex and nuanced understanding of family leisure and the differential (often gendered) impacts that engaging in activities such as sport can have on the experiences of mothers (e.g. Thompson, 1999) and fathers (e.g. Harrington, 2006, 2009; Kay, 2009a) as they engage in the process of parenting through leisure. Kay (2009a, p. 106), for example, has noted that, among other things, football provided fathers with 'one strategy for involvement with their sons by spending time with them, collaborating in their activities, and experiencing emotional closeness through shared experience and enjoyment'. Those fathers who did not necessarily participate in football nevertheless felt obliged to support their sons' participation in the sport, even if this simply meant 'being there' to watch them (Kay, 2009a). An Australian study of the emphasis fathers placed on 'being there' for their children in sporting settings similarly concluded that as well as passing on intergenerational experiences of sport and family life, children's involvement in sport

not only gives fathers interests in common with their children, and ways for fathers and children to bond together, but it also provides concrete ways of

supporting children in their activities, and occasions for private and meaningful conversation. (Harrington, 2009, p. 66)

Notwithstanding the centrality of sport to the leisure practices of fathers and the relationships they have with their children (Kay, 2009a, 2009b), mothers also play an important role in supporting young people's leisure-based experiences of sport, albeit in more gendered and usually different ways to fathers. In her study of women's participation in tennis, for example, Thompson (1999) claimed that many mothers performed largely domestic and stereotypically feminine duties (e.g. providing transport and washing clothes), rather than organizing and directly providing sports events since this was the responsibility of fathers. The unequal power relations which often characterize the different roles mothers perform in family leisure, including their children's sport participation, are also said to be more evident in the distribution of the work associated with these activities rather than whether they are actively involved at all (Shaw, 2008). In this respect, Shaw (2008) has argued that much of the 'hidden' work of family leisure (e.g. planning, scheduling, and organizing of leisure) is the primary responsibility of women and in a manner that 'compounds the heavy workload experienced by many mothers' and adds significantly 'to their other family and household responsibilities, and to the paid work responsibilities of employed mothers' (Shaw, 2008, p. 697).

The frequently gendered roles performed by parents in supporting the sport and leisure participation of their offspring cannot, however, be adequately understood in isolation from the growth and increasing diversity of 'non-traditional' family forms (see Kay, 2004, 2009b), and from the individual and collective impacts of other forms

of social inequality, especially social class. In this regard, Dagkas and Stathi (2007) have argued that the higher rates of overall sport participation and greater number of activities undertaken by 16-year-olds living in usually middle-class, two-parent families in their study was supported by various class-related practices. These included the participants' ability to take advantage of the greater financial and transport assistance available to them in their familial networks, and their greater involvement in whole family-centred activities at weekends intended to enhance their sporting tastes and habits (Dagkas & Stathi, 2007). Participants from single-parent families had limited experiences of leisure-based sport, received little, if any, financial support and encouragement from parents, and were more likely to perform caring roles for siblings and adopt largely sedentary leisure lifestyles (Dagkas & Stathi, 2007).

In seeking to provide a more nuanced analysis of the differential contribution made by parents to their children's leisure-based sports practices, Quarmby and Dagkas (2010) noted that participation among the 11-14-year-olds in their study was initially encouraged by all mothers and fathers, but the amount and type of encouragement varied across family structures, with children from two-parent families being more likely to receive parental encouragement and assistance (e.g. with transport and financial commitments) to support their participation. Both parents were also more likely to transmit sporting dispositions and choices by encouraging their offspring to engage in joint family-based physical activities (Quarmby & Dagkas, 2010). The leisure activities of mothers from the three single-parent families in the study rarely reinforced their own early interest in physical activity through joint family leisure activities, preferring instead to engage with their children in more low-cost activities

(such as watching television) that could be accommodated alongside other parental responsibilities (e.g. caring for siblings) (Quarmby & Dagkas, 2010). These findings were reinforced in a study by Quarmby et al. (2011) which revealed that children in couple families (and some step-families), especially boys, spent more time participating with one or both parents in sports such as swimming and cycling, while those from single-parent families were more likely to spend large parts of their family-based leisure engaging in sedentary activities (Quarmby et al., 2011).

Although it has become somewhat unfashionable to make too much of the impact of social class in structuring leisure-sport participation and other aspects of social life (Coalter, 2013; Evans & Bairner, 2012), it is clear that many kinds of class-related advantages that first emerge during childhood impact variously on sport participation during this and subsequent life-stages. Evans and Bairner (2012) have similarly emphasized that many of the class-based resources associated with participation in sport and other social activities are, to a large degree, acquired and reproduced in the context of family life and through class-based parenting practices. In particular, they argue that more middle-class families are often better able to invest their offspring with different kinds of symbolically significant opportunities, abilities, and identities through the cultural transmission of sporting dispositions (Evans & Bairner, 2012; Evans & Davies, 2010). Growing-up in more middle-class families is thus more likely to expose children and young people to efficacious social contexts in which they are socialized intensely, extensively, and are likely to become more physically literate (Evans & Bairner, 2012; Evans & Davies, 2010) as a consequence of their parents' engagement in what Evans and Davies (2010, p. 771) have described as the "increasing amounts of the 'work of learning' ... (that) are and have to be done

outside school, in and around the home, as part of ... the ‘corporealisation of childhood’”. In this respect, family leisure is often regarded as an important context in which socially valuable stocks of economic, physical, social and cultural capitals are often transmitted between family members within their particular social milieu (Evans & Bairner, 2012; Evans & Davies, 2010). These family leisure contexts in turn provide the vital preconditions under which differential processes of childhood sport socialization occur, and the experiences of them have been shown to provide the foundation upon which the construction of future unequal sport participation rates and careers are based (Birchwood et al., 2008; Haycock & Smith, 2014a).

Sports socialization and habitus formation

As Kay and Spaaij (2012, p. 79) have noted, the family is now ‘rightly regarded as a crucial influence on young people’s involvement with sport’, which is in turn shaped by often significant variations in the ideologies and practices that exist between and within different family types (Kay & Spaaij, 2012). More particularly, the family, it is claimed, ‘is a major conduit for social class differentiation in sport’ (Kay, 2004, p. 42), including in relation to practical resources (e.g. income, transport availability, access to facilities), the transmission of values and dispositions (often emphasizing the social and health benefits of participation), the time spent participating and in which social contexts, and the degree to which sport is seen as a family priority and parental responsibility (Kay, 2004). It is important to note, however, that the role played by the family for the sports socialization of children is especially significant during primary socialization, which is ‘the initial process through which children come to define their own identity and learn the rules and norms of the society of which they are part’ (Kay, 2004, p. 40), as well as the various skills, dispositions, and

knowledge needed to play sport. During phases of secondary socialization, the influence of immediate family members on sport and leisure participation is often thought to become less directly significant and, instead, usually complements other increasingly influential significant others such as friends and peers, as well as those in educational settings (Green, 2010). As Lareau (2011, p. 386) has observed, however, conceptualizing the process of socialization in this way may run the risk of conveying the misleading picture that ‘children are passive rather than active agents and that the relationship between parents and their children is unidirectional rather than reciprocal and dynamic’. In the present study, however, it is recognized that socialization is indeed a dynamic, reciprocal and inequitable process that occurs in multiple social contexts, whether formally or informally, directly or indirectly, explicitly or implicitly, intentionally or unintentionally, and always within the context of social relationships characterized by varying degrees of negotiation and constraint (Green, 2010; Lareau, 2011; Mennell & Goudsblom, 1998).

The findings of several national and international studies have consistently indicated that having two sports-active parents is one of the major predictors for higher rates of sport participation among children (e.g. Davison et al., 2003; Haycock & Smith, 2014a; Pot et al., 2014; Scheerder et al., 2005; Vandermeersch et al., 2014). As Scheerder et al. (2005, p. 12) have noted in relation to Flanders, parental sports participation is a ‘very important predictor of boys’ and girls’ participation in club-organized sports activities’, and leisure-sport participation more broadly, with those young people participating most frequently in both domains having two parents who themselves are sports-active. Another study of youth participation in club-based sport in Flanders between 1989 and 2009 (Vandermeersch et al., 2014) also revealed that

although males were more likely to participate in traditional club sports during this 20-year period, more middle-class males and females were much more likely to do so compared to their peers from less favourable social positions. This, they argued, was closely associated to the social class background of parents, previous parental experience of club-organized sport, and both parents' current participation. In particular, it was clear that parents with a higher social class background, and with greater stocks of sporting capital, were more likely to 'pass on their love for sports and/or bring in their knowledge about club-organised sports to orientate and socialise their children' (Vandermeersch et al., 2014, p. 10) in to sport.

In their study of Australian girls attending a school in a deprived rural town, Smyth et al. (2014, p. 16) have similarly noted that the 'family and class operate as key sites in the accumulation of cultural and social capital necessary' to promote and sustain sport participation via the transmission of parental values and preferences. The parents of more middle-class and active girls were more likely to reschedule their lives to promote and accommodate physical activity as a priority in the leisure lives of their offspring. For these girls, the significant symbolic and material investments provided by their parents facilitated their engagement in 'the hectic shuttling and prioritising necessary for them to participate in a range of physical and sporting activities outside of school' (Smyth et al., 2014, p. 11). In contrast, working-class girls, who were also the least active, had 'no such "sporty" role models' (Smyth et al., 2014, p. 11) and were more likely to be 'cared for by other siblings who were themselves overburdened with working to make ends meet often at multiple jobs' (Smyth et al., 2014, p. 11), which helped limit the number and range of activities in which they could participate during their leisure.

The conclusion that middle-class children are more likely to participate in a higher number and wider range of leisure activities (including sport) than other children, and are more likely to undertake leisure activities organized and controlled by parents who regard leisure as an important site for personal development and the accumulation of socially significant cultural capital, is evident from other studies in Eastern (e.g. Birchwood et al., 2008; Lenartowicz, 2013) and Western Europe (e.g. Haycock & Smith, 2014a; Jakobsson et al., 2012; Parry, 2013; Pot et al., 2014), the USA (e.g. Lareau, 2011; Trost & Loprinzi, 2011; Welk et al., 2003), and Australia (e.g. Wright & MacDonald, 2010; Wright et al., 2003). In Lenartowicz's (2013: 14) study of the 'class-oriented character of sports socialization' in Poland, for example, all parents were said to pass on family sporting traditions and activities to their offspring, but it was middle-class parents who possessed greater economic, cultural, social and physical resources who were more likely to do so. The children in lower social class families, however, typically participated in fewer and a narrower range of leisure activities, had parents who were more likely to value sport for instrumental purposes (e.g. for the promotion of health, fitness and discipline), and lived in families where sport often dominated their cultural participation (Lenartowicz, 2013).

Data from the 1970 British Cohort Study also indicate that 'the influence of parents and the home environment on children's early experiences of physical activity are the primary driver of positive experiences of physical activity both outside and inside school' (Parry, 2013, p. 49). This meant that children socialized into sport outside of school by their parents during childhood were already more active and had better experiences of sport than those who were not, and that any school-based sports made little impact on pre-existing differences in sport participation (Parry, 2013). These

differences in participation generated during childhood appear to have long lasting effects for, as Evans and Davies (2010, p. 768-9) have observed, upon leaving compulsory schooling in England there are often few alterations in ‘social patterns and inequalities and the predispositions for sport amongst individuals and populations’ in their leisure time. This, they argued, is frequently related to the class-based practices and other processes of social reproduction evident in the ways (usually middle-class) families spend their leisure time, including through the investment in their offspring of resources that enable them to develop the ‘right kinds’ of sporting ‘ability’ and predispositions that enable them to ‘get ahead’ (Evans & Bairner, 2012; Evans & Davies, 2010).

These family-based practices were reported in a study which investigated the leisure-sport careers of 19 30-35-year-olds living in north-west England, and the key features of childhood sport socialization that typically preceded high levels of sport participation in adulthood (Haycock & Smith, 2014a). Since the majority of the participants’ parents had previously participated in sport at some point throughout the life course, Haycock and Smith (2014a) concluded that whether parents themselves were active sports participants could not adequately explain the variations in frequency of sport participation. The clearest differences lay instead in the participants’ different experiences of childhood sport socialization. Indeed, reflecting the findings of those studies reviewed above, the more frequent (four times or more per week) current participants in Haycock and Smith’s (2014a) study tended to have two sports-active parents who encouraged them to participate in sport, typically for enjoyment and the ‘love’ of sport, and who experienced fewer financial and transport constraints than other parents (see also Allender et al., 2006; Pot et al., 2014;

Thompson et al., 2003). These respondents were also more likely to have inherited sporting habituses and values from both parents who were in turn more able, and likely, to purposively invest (e.g. emotionally, financially and culturally) their offspring with different resources and kinds of ‘ability’ that formed the basis of their predispositions towards childhood sport participation.

The significance of habitus formation also helped explain the present-day participation of less active participants locked into childhood familial networks where sport was neither highly valued, nor normalized to a large extent, compared to other leisure activities favoured by their parents (Haycock & Smith, 2014a). During childhood and youth, the less active participants engaged in largely non-active family-based cultural practices that did not appear conducive to developing the kinds of sporting habituses possessed by their more active counterparts (Haycock & Smith, 2014a). This was reinforced by the tendency for *either* their mother or father to adopt a dominant role in relation to their childhood sports socialization. For many of the women in the sample, it was their mothers who played the major role in planning and organizing their early engagement in leisure-sport, even though they were not always directly involved as active sports participants alongside their offspring. These mothers – who had themselves been variously active when young – played an important role in encouraging some respondents’ sporting experiences by providing what has been described as much of the ‘hidden’ work of family leisure (Harrington, 2009, 2013; Shaw, 2008), and spent disproportionate amounts of time on their daughters’ initial engagement in sport and other leisure activities than their fathers. For other respondents, however, fathers (the majority of whom had themselves continued participating until at least their mid-twenties) played a greater role in childhood

socialization and used sport as a means of engaging in shared leisure experiences and bonding with their children (Harrington, 2006, 2009, 2013; Kay, 2009a; Shaw, 2008).

Although the identified features of childhood sport socialization in Haycock and Smith's (2014a) study nearly always led to higher levels of sport participation in adulthood, they cannot be regarded as sufficient explanations of well-known changes in levels of sport participation (typically downwards) post-childhood, or of generational shifts in participation (Green, 2010; Roberts & Brodie, 1992; Rowe, 2015; van Bottenburg et al., 2005). Nor did they mediate the impact of life transitions on participation (Haycock & Smith, 2014b; Lunn, 2010; Lunn et al., 2013; Rapoport & Rapoport, 1975; Roberts & Brodie, 1992). Rather, each of the identified features of childhood sport socialization appeared to facilitate the development of a broader repertoire of sports skills, interests, and predispositions that helped broaden the participants' childhood sporting biographies and sustained their leisure-sport careers into young adulthood (Haycock & Smith, 2014a). In this regard, the findings were consistent with those of studies elsewhere in Europe, including Sweden, where Jakobsson et al. (2012, p. 13) have noted that young people who participated in a variety of sports with their parents at age 13, and who had by that time developed 'a habitus with a taste for sport' and possessed higher cultural capital, were more likely to be club sport participants three years later than other young people. The most sports-active young people, in particular, were said to possess a sporting habitus that had been developed through their engagement in 'a greater repertoire of different kinds of physical activity and sport' (Jakobsson et al., 2012, p. 14) when young which enhanced their physical competence in, and taste for, regular participation.

The construction of sporting habituses and socialization practices which are associated with higher rates of sport participation and longer-running sport careers have, however, also been shown to operate relatively independently of social class (Birchwood et al., 2008; Pot et al., 2014). As with the parents of more middle-class families, parents from lower social class groupings in the Netherlands, for example, have also been shown to socialize their offspring into sport through a variety of support mechanisms (e.g. transport, finance, attending events), providing advice about performance, and passing on ‘what the family considered important values and behaviours’ (Pot et al., 2014, p. 9). In particular, as the main socializing agents in introducing their offspring to sport and in the early construction of their sporting habituses, parents were said to be ‘extremely important for the predisposition to play sports and for transferring the socio-cultural aspects of sporting capital. Parents not only introduced children to the social context of the sporting club but also guided the formation of sports-related values and behaviour’ (Pot et al., 2014, p. 14). Peers, by contrast, were not regarded as being centrally relevant to the formation of sporting habituses, but were nevertheless ‘considered an important information source when they [young people] could not decide which sport to choose’ (Pot et al., 2014, p. 13), and for maximizing the fun that resulted from social interaction in sports contexts. In this regard, it was clear that although parents transmitted the predispositions to participate to their offspring during childhood, ‘peers have an influence on the interpretation ... young adolescents give to their sports habitus’ (Pot et al., 2014, p. 15).

In contrast to the largely positive ways in which parents actively socialize their offspring and help construct their predispositions for sport participation, recent studies

of Chinese youth have also indicated that parents adopt similar strategies in relation to other activities at the expense of sport (e.g. Ha et al., 2010; Pang et al., 2013). The findings of one study of Chinese migrant young people's participation in physical activity in Australia (Pang et al., 2013), for example, indicated that many parents regarded sport and physical activity 'as being nothing but "physical" and conceptualised sport as worth doing only if it contributed to substantial symbolic capital and legitimised cultural capital' (Pang et al., 2013, p. 10) associated with more 'worthwhile' pursuits such as academic study and music. Accordingly, parents sought to develop appropriate predispositions among young people that helped achieve their aspiration of securing an ideal and culturally significant job, which it was believed would assist in upward social mobility and occupying a position within the middle-class (Pang et al., 2013). Similar findings were reported in another study of 9-16-year-old Hong Kong Chinese young people whose parents, following the principles of Confucianism, placed more value on the educational success of their offspring rather than health and sport participation, especially as children got older (Ha et al., 2010). Indeed, although the participants were encouraged by all their parents to engage in sport during the primary school years, this was usually as a means for achieving other ends. Mothers were said to focus more on 'personal development such as self-confidence, health and body shape, while fathers also valued social and family bonds that could be generated through sports, particularly team sports' (Ha et al., 2010, p. 341). As the participants aged, however, the range of activities in which young people were involved, and the time they devoted to sport, declined substantially as their parents encouraged them towards participating in academic-related activities including music and art (Ha et al., 2010). This was closely associated with parents' concern for deploying strategies that strengthened their Confucian beliefs, which

included prioritizing children's educational achievement at the expense of family-based sport participation, so that their offspring were more likely to pursue high-paying careers (Ha et al., 2010).

Summary

This chapter has examined some of the key patterns, trends and inequalities in sport participation among young people, and how their engagement in sport changes during times of transition, particularly in relation to HE. In doing so, the chapter has noted that many of the predispositions for sport participation have been hypothesized to emerge during childhood and are relatively set by age 16, after which sport participation changes characteristically in relation to the foundations laid during the formation of sporting habituses in family contexts and the socialization practices which occur therein. The next chapter seeks to locate young people's sport participation and sport careers within their broader leisure lifestyles and then considers the major theoretical concepts and frameworks that have been used to make sense of these.

Chapter Two

Youth, Leisure and the Life Course

Introduction

On the assumption that it is only possible to adequately understand youth sport by locating it within the broader context of young people's leisure and the life course more broadly (Green, 2014; Hendry et al., 1993; Roberts, forthcoming; Wright et al., 2003), this chapter examines some of the broader changes in childhood and youth as life stages and their implications for young people's engagement in leisure activities which compete with sport for their time, money and attention. In doing so, it examines: (i) conceptualizations of the life course and the processes involved in its de-standardization; (ii) the implications of the expansion of HE and changes in the labour market; (iii) changes in youth leisure careers and biographies; and (iv) the key theoretical concepts and frameworks deployed in the sociological study of youth and those which informed the analysis of data presented in this thesis.

From life cycle to life course

As Roberts (2013a, p. 259) has noted, studies of young people's leisure have been undertaken largely by sociologists and psychologists of youth, the work of whom has been underpinned by a commitment to 'investigating the links between leisure behavior and age or life-stage transitions'. During the 1970s Rapoport and Rapoport (1975) famously argued in their study, *Leisure and the Family Life-Cycle*, that most people in Britain experienced occupational, family and leisure careers, and that the lives of family members were individually and collectively constructed in socially patterned ways. The Rapoports (1975) argued that the interaction between these three

main careers was central to the formulation of successive life stages in which leisure behaviours were thought to be based upon pre-occupations, concerns and interests arising from common work and family situations. In relation to young people, the youth life-stage was viewed as a period in which adolescents were generally pre-occupied with creating and reinforcing their own personal identities, particularly in the company of friends and others whom they valued (Rapoport & Rapoport, 1975). Indeed, as Elias (2001) has also claimed, during the adolescent years young people were thought to be centrally concerned with establishing their identity by engaging in leisure activities that enabled them to answer the question: 'who am I?'. Young adults, by contrast, were said to be more interested with commencing their work careers and getting married before starting a family in the pre-1970s period and thus tended to limit their leisure to largely home-centred settings with partners (Rapoport & Rapoport, 1975). Although experienced differently according to social divisions such as gender and social class, the Rapoports (1975) argued that from an early age youth leisure behaviour was typically constructed within similar life cycle transitions, and that each group would progress through successive life stages together and share similar transitional experiences. In this respect, it was concluded that 'people built long-term leisure careers, and that their leisure in later life stages was influenced by whatever they had done and learnt earlier in life' (Roberts, 2013a, p. 257), which made it easier for young people to predict their own future by observing older members of their cohort who had previously been in similar situations.

Until the mid-1970s the concept of life cycles was uncontroversial and positively received within leisure research (Roberts, 2006). This was because family

relationships were typically long lasting, there were obvious links between age and life transitions, and an understanding of life cycle transitions that were commonly experienced in the progression from youth to young adulthood was important because these transitions characterized the day-to-day patterns in the leisure lives of people (Roberts, 2006). In the period since, however, the concept of life cycles – which conceptualized people's lives as cyclical in nature – has become increasingly problematic and no longer helps to explain adequately subsequent changes in the life course (Heinz, 2009; Roberts, 2006), including changes in leisure behaviour. According to Roberts (2006, 2009a), these changes were associated with a range of social processes, including: the changing youth labour market where jobs have become more flexible, less permanent and occupational careers less secure; increased risk of unemployment and varying work schedules; the reconstitution of neighbourhoods that are no longer as close-knit as previously; and the speed of social and economic change. Life course changes such as these have made it increasingly difficult to accurately predict the ages at which major life events and subsequent transitions will occur. Some groups at the peak of adulthood may choose to retire early, younger adults may restart work careers having completed a period of full-time education or training, and for women especially, they are now more able to adopt traditional roles (e.g. as a housewife and mother) as well as pursue single and dual-career relationships, or remain childless, than formerly (Furlong, 2013; Roberts, 2006). By the mid-to-late twenties some young adults may have established themselves on long-term successful career pathways, whilst others may become trapped in a long-term cycle of low-paid jobs and unemployment known as the 'low-pay, no-pay' cycle (Shildrick & MacDonald, 2013; Shildrick et al., 2012).

Notwithstanding the scale and significance of change in the life course that can be observed during the last four decades, 'the destandardization of the life course is a trend, not an absolute state' (Roberts, 2006, p. 128). Age remains an important factor of social discrimination in a variety of leisure contexts, ranging from labour market position to attending pubs and clubs, to the existence of minimum entrance ages in many gymnasiums and health clubs (Coalter, 2007; Roberts, 2006). Young people, in particular, spend much of their time in 'highly age-segregated contexts' (Heath et al., 2009, p. 5), including in universities and colleges of higher education which, it has been claimed, have 'also become more homogenous in terms of age than perhaps used to be the case' (Heath et al., 2009). It will not be until the current and future generations of young adults have been fully exposed to all of these trends, Roberts (2006) argues, that all of the outcomes of the destandardization of the life course will become evident. One life-stage that has become rather different from those that existed in the 1970s, however, is that of youth. Before examining the processes involved in the changing nature of the life-stage between youth and young adulthood, it is important to note that young people continue to be the age group most receptive to the latest music and fashions, and continue to have the highest participation rates in general across forms of out-of-home leisure, including participation in sport and physical activity (Roberts, 2006), which form part of what Heath et al. (2009, p. 1) describe as 'society's fascination with youth as a life stage'.

Youth and the life course

It is now well established that youth is 'a key period of transition and change, marked by individual development from the status of "child", through "youth", and onwards

towards “adulthood” (Heath et al., 2009, p. 7). The major changes and social transformations in young people’s lives since the 1970s are encapsulated by what Roberts (1996) calls ‘youth’s new condition’ in which the youth life-stage has generally been prolonged, or at least become more varied in length. This has not meant that young people’s social class background, level of education, and other social markers, are no longer related to their future life chances as adults (Roberts, 1996). In fact, these predictors remain equally significant today, but because of the variety of different configurations in which young people from a range of social categories congregate nowadays they are less likely to be aware of their shared similarities than their predecessors (Furlong, 2013; Furlong & Cartmel, 2007; Roberts, 1996).

Although there are still some young people who leave compulsory education aged 16 and progress straight into full-time employment, and others form relationships and set up households in which diverse family structures become based but are contingent on ethnic and cultural background (see Berthoud, 2005; Smart & Shipman, 2004), the destandardization of the life course has meant that the typical ages at which these life phases are experienced is higher than in the pre-1970s period (Roberts, 1996). For reasons explained in more detail below, this can be related partly to increased levels of unemployment that have helped to create an increasingly competitive labour market, and, simultaneously, to the tendency for more young people to remain in education to enhance their qualifications and allow them to compete for desirable, and better paid, jobs during adulthood. To some extent these transitional delays have contributed to the unintended slowing of family transitions (e.g. forming longer-term relationships, buying a house, having children). However, other factors include:

improvements in fertility control and labour market opportunities for young women; and the increase in the number of parents with the ability to support children through the prolonged transitions from youth to young adulthood (Furlong & Cartmel, 2007; Heinz, 2009; Roberts, 2009a). Collectively, these processes are associated with the tendency for the lives of many young people in their early to mid-twenties to remain

characterised by a relative freedom from many of the traditional markers of 'adult' status, such as permanent employment, settling down with a long-term partner, parenthood and independent housing arrangements. (Heath et al., 2009, p. 4)

Despite the prolonging of the youth life-stage there has been no rise in the age at which youth 'formally' commences. The statutory school-leaving age of sixteen has remained constant in Britain since 1972 and, for reasons explained below, by this age most young people have typically adopted adult-like leisure activities. It is also worth noting that there has been no overall change in the age at which young people tend to leave their parents' home to live independently. Instead, Furlong (2013) and Roberts (2009a) claim that it is common for present-day young people to experience an intermediate stage in their transition from youth (leaving the parental home) to young adulthood (sometimes involving marrying and becoming a parent) and the major life events associated with this transition. In particular, they argue that it is no longer common for these major life events to occur simultaneously as they did before the 1970s (Furlong & Cartmel, 2007; Roberts, 2009a); although important variations exist between families from diverse cultural backgrounds (Berthoud, 2005; Smart & Shipman, 2004), it has become normalized nowadays for some couples to live first at

the same residence before getting married, others may develop civil partnerships, remain cohabiting with partners, or live alone for greater or lesser periods of time in their chosen means of residence.

Closely related to the destandardization of the life course and the reality of life transitions ‘as non-linear, as involving breaks, gaps and reversals: as individualized’ (Furlong, 2013, p. 10), is the increasing social expectation that people will shape their own biographies and identities (Heinz, 2009; Miles, 2000; Roberts, 2006). For young people, in particular, the individualization of their identities and lives more broadly is closely linked to the need for them to continually manage the constraints on them because of their interdependence with many other people (Elias, 2001; Jeffs & Smith, 1998; Miles, 2000). On the one hand, it has been suggested that many young people value ‘their freedom, their ability to act on their own responsibility and to decide for themselves’ (Elias, 2001, p. 129), especially in leisure where they are able to engage in a range of activities (including sport). At the same time, though, while it is frequently ‘a personal ideal of young people and adults to differ from others in one way or another, to distinguish oneself – in short, to be different’ (Elias, 2001, p. 140), this can lead them to experience feelings of ‘separateness and encapsulation ... in their relations to each other’ (Elias, 2001, p. 121), especially in leisure. This tendency for people’s lives and biographies to become increasingly interdependent, and highly individualized, has been strongly associated with changes in education (especially the expansion of HE) and vocational markets, the expansion of training schemes and existence of part-time jobs (or periods of unemployment), and the expansion of commercial leisure markets in which young people both consume and contribute to

the production of goods and services (Furlong, 2013; Furlong & Cartmel, 2007; Roberts, 1996). Some of these issues are explored below.

Youth and the expansion of higher education

In relation to education, which together with employment remains one of the main structural influences on young people's lives (Miles, 2000; Reay et al., 2010), it is now well documented that following the expansion of HE in England since the 1980s many more young people now remain in education after the statutory school-leaving age, especially those from more advantaged backgrounds (Forsyth & Furlong, 2003; Furlong & Cartmel, 2009; Roberts, 2010, 2013b). Indeed, there has been a doubling in the number of graduates from HE from 17 per cent in 1992 to 38 per cent in 2013 (ONS, 2013). The increasing number of entrants to HE has continued despite the gradual introduction of tuition fees in the late 1990s, and reforms to funding of undergraduate provision for UK- and EU-domiciled students which began in the academic year 2012-13, and which included the payment of tuition fees of up to £9,000 across the HE sector in England. According to UUK (2014), between 2010-11 and 2013-14 the number of UK- and EU-domiciled undergraduates who entered HE institutions in England decreased by 22 per cent, driven mainly by a 48 per cent reduction in the number of part-time students enrolling in HE compared to a four per cent reduction among full-time students. The recruitment of young undergraduates to full-time courses in the same period increased by 3.2 per cent with participation rates now described as being 'at record levels' (UUK, 2014: 2). This has not impacted institutions uniformly however, since 27 per cent have reported an increase in undergraduate entrants and 73 per cent a decline, while just over one-half (55 per cent) of institutions have reported declines in full-time student recruitment and 82 per

cent in part-time recruitment (UUK, 2014).

In 2012-13, those aged up to 20-years-old (so-called 'young students') in the UK accounted for 56 per cent of all UK- and EU-domiciled undergraduate students, and just over one-third were 18-years-old (UUK, 2014). In 2012-13, one-third of women (34 per cent) and one-quarter of men (26 per cent) aged up to 20 entered HE, the highest level recorded for each group. Although the proportion of students defined as being of 'white' ethnicity (75 per cent) is much higher than other students who accept places on undergraduate courses, between 2007 and 2013 the proportion of acceptances from black students (74 per cent), those of mixed or other ethnic backgrounds (54 per cent), and Asian ethnicity (34 per cent) increased substantially compared to their 'white' peers (18 per cent) (UUK, 2014). Based on data derived from the Participation of Local Areas (POLAR) measure – a 'widely-used measure of disadvantage in higher education' (UUK, 2014, p. 14) – the recruitment of disadvantaged 18-year-old students to undergraduate courses also increased from 10 to 17 per cent between 2004 and 2013, but nearly three times as many advantaged students (48 per cent) entered HE in 2013. By age 19, six-in-ten students from advantaged backgrounds (60 per cent) entered HE, while less than one-quarter (23 per cent) of those from the most disadvantaged backgrounds did so (UUK, 2014). The majority of students (approximately 73 per cent) entering undergraduate courses between 2010 and 2013 lived away from their parental homes, and A-levels were the most widely-held qualification (57 per cent), followed by BTECs (6 per cent), with which young students entered undergraduate courses in 2012-13 (UUK, 2014). Between 2010 and 2012, there was a 23 per cent overall decline in the proportion of entrants to humanities-related subjects (including a 25 per cent decline for business

and administrative studies) and 15 per cent for science-related subjects, though smaller declines (5.5 per cent) were observed for biological sciences (which includes sport and exercise sciences and psychology) (UUK, 2014).

Although the expansion of HE has ‘resulted in the increased participation of groups who once were largely excluded’ (Furlong & Cartmel, 2009, p. 121), especially those from less well-off backgrounds and some minority groups, inequalities in access and experience remain and disproportionately advantage more middle-class undergraduates (Furlong & Cartmel, 2009; Hartas, 2014a, 2014b; Reay, 2001; Reay et al., 2010). Indeed, although HE participation has increased among all social groups, traditionally advantaged (especially middle-class) students – who usually enter HE having previously achieved higher qualifications than their less advantaged counterparts – have experienced the greatest benefit from the expansion of HE provision in England (UUK, 2014). The existence of, among other things, widening participation policies, provision of student loans and, until recently, the wide availability of means-tested grants and other financial support packages, have thus failed to enhance significantly the proportion of less advantaged students entering HE and helped make ‘very little impact on the overall social distribution of entrants’ (Furlong & Cartmel, 2009, p. 122) in the last three decades or so. It remains the case that the HE participation rates, in absolute and proportional terms, of those who are most advantaged are greater than any other group (Forsyth & Furlong, 2003; Roberts, 2013b).

In addition to inequalities of access, it is also clear that the persistence and growth of class-based income inequalities, parental encouragement towards education, and

differential school attainment impact significantly on students' ability to enter HE and derive positive experiences from it (Furlong & Cartmel, 2009; Hartas, 2014b; Reay, 2001; Reay et al., 2010). As with participation in other activities including sport (see Chapter 1), the educational advantages enjoyed by some students, which are produced in the family and reproduced in schools, help develop a habitus in which the preconditions for educational success can be more-or-less maximized and 'converted' into valuable qualifications that have a positive impact on school experiences and performance (Bodovski, 2014; Hartas, 2014b; Reay et al., 2010; Reay et al., 2005).

As with students' prior educational careers, their experiences of university are also significantly influenced by a variety of other processes that collectively comprise what has been termed the 'institutional habitus' (Reay et al., 2010; Reay et al., 2005) of the institutions they attend. Among the key elements of institutional habitus are: the design and content of curricular; the diet of subjects provided for students; the kinds of facilities available for academic study and recreational engagement (including sport participation); and the ethos and reputation of the institution in relation to things such as teaching, research, student satisfaction and experience, and graduate employability (Reay et al., 2010; Reay et al., 2005). In relation to sport, for example, many institutions perceive the provision of modern, aesthetically pleasing and commercial-like sports facilities as key to strengthening and increasing student recruitment and marketing (Sport England, 2014c; TNS-BMRB, 2013), particularly but not exclusively to those studying sports-related courses. The quantity and quality of sports facilities are also perceived as being symbolically representative of an organization's status and position within institutional hierarchies that are important sources of distinction in the HE marketplace (Ball, 2012; Furlong and Cartmel, 2009).

A reputation for attracting elite athletes to study and train on campus, performing well in sporting competitions including those organized by the British Universities and Colleges Sport (BUCS), and a reputation for producing ‘good’ sports graduates, are part of wider marketing strategies employed by HE institutions intended to reproduce the advantages they have for their preferred target market of students (Ball, 2012; Furlong and Cartmel, 2009).

Each of the above features of institutional habitus are said to contribute in complex ways to the different experiences students have of HE (Ball, 2013; Reay et al., 2010; Reay et al., 2005), and have a relatively independent impact on their individual and group habituses (such as gender and class habituses) (Dunning, 2002; Elias, 2001) which are to a large extent shaped by much earlier experiences of social life, especially during childhood (Bodovski, 2014; Hartas, 2014b; van Krieken, 1998). They are also believed to contribute to what has been termed ‘the horizontal stratification of the student experience’ (Furlong & Cartmel, 2009, p. 123) in HE in which class-related experiences, in particular, are reinforced and contribute to

a multitude of divisions ... including the division between ‘old’ and ‘new’ universities, between prestigious and less prestigious courses, between students living at home and those who have moved to study and between those who enjoy student-focused lifestyles and those who must combine study with extensive engagement in employment-related activities. (Furlong & Cartmel, 2009, p. 123)

Of particular significance for the present study, then, are the kinds of institutions students attend, the courses they study, and the degree to which the expansion of HE has prolonged the period they may spend being semi-dependent on parents, often combining education and paid (usually part-time) work, and accumulating significant financial debt (Christie, 2009; Hall, 2011; Reay et al., 2010). Indeed, the stratification of students' experience of HE relates significantly to their engagement in paid work for, while changes in financial support 'have increased the pressure on students from all social classes to combine study with employment, the pressure on students from less affluent families is particularly acute' (Furlong & Cartmel, 200, p. 125). Thus, how students' engagement in paid work, and the other ways in which they spend their leisure time, has particular implications for their propensity to engage in sport and for the degree to which facilities may encourage students' campus-based sport participation. This is often believed to be especially true for female students who enter HE in greater numbers than their male counterparts (UUK, 2014) and are thought to be more likely to engage, or re-engage, in sport participation having done so (Coalter, 2013; Coalter et al., 1995; Downward & Rasciute, 2014; Sport England, 2014c).

Youth, employment and unemployment

In the same way that students' experiences of HE have become increasingly diverse and fragmented in the last three decades or so (Furlong & Cartmel, 2009; Reay et al., 2005), so too has their engagement in the labour market and experiences of employment. As noted earlier, together with broader changes in the occupational structure and economy (Mortimer, 2009), this has been closely associated with the de-standardization of the life course, the increasing individualization and complexity of

transitions between youth and adulthood, and the tendency for higher proportions of young people to remain in education beyond the statutory school-leaving age (MacDonald, 2009; Roberts, 1996). One consequence of increased education participation has been delayed entry into the full-time labour market for many students. However, while the most advantaged are less likely to undertake paid work and use the time saved and other resources to devote to their academic studies and student lifestyles (Reay et al., 2010), for some students engaging in part-time work to support the payment of accommodation and subsistence costs, tuition fees, and sustain desirable lifestyles, is common (Broadbridge & Swanson, 2005; Hall, 2011; King & Bannon, 2002). One recent study of 2,128 students conducted in the UK by NUS Services indicated that just under one-half of students (45 per cent) had a part-time job, one-third worked part-time during term time, and 13 per cent claimed to work full-time during term time, holidays or both (Gil, 2014). In the USA, it has also been estimated that almost three-quarters of university students are in paid employment, with just under one-half of these working for 25 hours or more each week (King & Bannon, 2002). Similarly, in Australia, a substantial proportion (approximately 8-in-10) of undergraduate students are in paid employment. Between 1994 and 2009, it was reported that ‘a clear upward trend in number of hours worked and a downward trend in number of hours spent studying outside normal teaching hours and in recreational activities’ (Hall, 2011, p. 442) could be observed alongside a decline in the proportion of students not in paid employment (Hall, 2011). More recent data on Australian students suggest that while there has been a slight decline in the proportion of full-time undergraduates in paid employment (81 per cent in 2012 compared to 86 per cent in 2006), those from more disadvantaged backgrounds are more likely to work than other students. The average hours worked in term time by all full-time

undergraduate students who were in employment have, however, increased from 14.8 to 16.0 hours between 2006 and 2012, with approximately one-quarter now working over 20 hours per week (Bexley et al., 2013).

Pursuing paid employment often means university work becomes one among many other priorities that has to be accommodated within students' busy schedules (Christie, 2009; Reay et al., 2010), and concern has been expressed about how the hours students typically work impact negatively on academic study and performance, students' social integration with peers into university life, and their ability to pursue other extra-curricular activities including sport participation (Bexley et al., 2013; Broadbridge & Swanson, 2005; Hall, 2011; King & Bannon, 2002). Notwithstanding the pressures undertaking paid work alongside academic study may have for some students, there remains a strong belief among many students of the employment value of a relevant degree and going to university, even if this means they have to balance their academic studies with engagement in an often casualized labour market. This is because attending university is often seen as a means of avoiding employment in low paid, insecure, and poor prospect jobs (Christie, 2009; MacDonald, 2009; Reay et al., 2010), which are frequently (but sometimes misleadingly) presented as the alternative to further academic study and emblematic of those who are, at best, believed to occupy low skilled and precarious forms of employment, or, at worst, locked into cultures of worklessness with few prospects of upward social mobility (Macdonald, 2009; Shildrick & MacDonald, 2013).

The perceived employment-related benefits of pursuing HE study is one part unsurprising for, as UUK (2014: 4) have noted, 'the premium to individual lifetime

earnings associated with a university degree at £168,000 for men and £252,000 for women ... [has] persisted despite the recent expansion in graduates'. The latest available data on graduates in the UK labour market also revealed that between April and June 2013, graduates were 'more likely to be employed, less likely to be searching for work and much less likely to be out of the labour force than people who left education with lower qualifications or no qualifications' (ONS, 2013, p. 6). In particular, 87 per cent of graduates were in employment compared to 83 per cent of those educated to A-level standard, 76 per cent of those to A*-C grade GCSE standard, 70 per cent of those with other qualifications, and almost twice as likely to be employed compared to those with no qualifications (47 per cent) (ONS, 2013). Graduates were also less likely to be unemployed (4 per cent) compared to those with A-levels (5 per cent), with A*-C GCSE grades (8 per cent), and three times less likely to be unemployed than those with other qualifications (11 per cent) or no qualifications (16 per cent) (ONS, 2013). Finally, graduates were also much less likely to be economically inactive (9 per cent) than all of the groups, particularly those whose highest qualifications were A*-C GCSEs (18 per cent) or who had no qualifications (44 per cent) at all (ONS, 2013). This having been said, as noted earlier, the greatest future employment-related benefits of obtaining a degree are found disproportionately among graduates from more advantaged backgrounds and who follow more prestigious courses (Reay, 2001; Reay et al., 2010), and who are often in receipt of considerable parental support during childhood which continues to exert substantial influence on future education and employment outcomes (Hartas, 2014a, 2014b). The reality for many more graduates is that they will pursue more fragmented employment pathways, at least in the short-term, as they first become 'engaged in a variety of jobs before developing more settled employment careers and, if they are

fortunate, settling into longer-term careers’ (Furlong, 2009, p. 145).

It has been argued that uncertainty in the youth labour market, for graduates and especially those with lower educational attainment, is not a recent phenomenon or limited to the lives of contemporary youth (Inui, 2009; MacDonald, 2009; Shildrick & MacDonald, 2013). There is instead much continuity between the present-day experiences young people have of the labour market and those of their predecessors, which is related not merely to uncertainty and precariousness in the labour market, but, significantly, to the ‘flux, uncertainty and precariousness of *transitions*’ (MacDonald, 2009, p. 170; original emphasis) undertaken by many young people during the course of their lives. Although graduates might be better placed to take advantage of rising employment rates (73 per cent of 16-64-year-olds in the UK were employed between February and April 2014) and falling unemployment rates (to 6 per cent between May and July 2014, the lowest since 2008) (ONS, 2014), this has not meant that opportunities and experiences in the labour market conditions have simultaneously improved for all young people (Shildrick & MacDonald, 2013; Shildrick et al., 2012). The expansion of flexible, casual, low paid and precarious work has become normal for some young people and adult members of the population, as the findings of qualitative studies of growing up in some of the most deprived areas in Britain (such as Teesside and Glasgow) have indicated (MacDonald & Shildrick, 2007, 2013; Shildrick et al., 2012). As MacDonald (2009, p. 173) has noted, ‘it is less educated and younger workers that take the brunt of precarious employment’, and engagement in poor, low paid and insecure work alongside episodic unemployment are common experiences that express and add to the class-based disadvantages experienced by those in the working-class (MacDonald, 2009;

Shildrick & MacDonald, 2013; Shildrick et al., 2012). It is thus not uncommon for more disadvantaged young people who are less educated, and do not enter HE, to become entrapped within cycles of cumulative disadvantage, and become more marginalized economically, as they move in and out of the low-pay/no pay cycles which characterize their labour market experiences and longer-term careers (MacDonald, 2009; Shildrick & MacDonald, 2013; Shildrick et al., 2012). The tendency in much policy to present some young people statically as being 'Not in Education, Employment or Training' (so-called NEETs), and as failing to take advantage of education-based opportunities (including in HE) in particular, is thus seen to underplay the complexities and dynamics which characterize the reality of many young people's lives (Inui, 2009; Shildrick et al., 2012).

Youth leisure careers and biographies

The pressure on young people to enter the labour market as well qualified as possible, often to maximize the economic returns available thereafter, constrains university students' ability to accommodate activities such as sport alongside other leisure pursuits within their already increasingly complex and highly individualized leisure careers and biographies (Furlong & Cartmel, 2009; MacDonald, 2009; Roberts, 1996). Indeed, the study of leisure careers and biographies within and between different life stages has identified at least two dominant, and broad, tendencies that help predict what people will do when they are relatively free to choose what they wish to do in their leisure time (Roberts, 2013a). The first, which is considered the strongest and most powerful tendency, is *continuity*. In many leisure activities, including sport, the best predictor of whether a person will engage in a particular activity in any week is what they did during the previous week (Birchwood et al.,

2008; Roberts, 2013a; Roberts & Brodie, 1992). This is not surprising for, as Roberts (2013a, p. 260) has observed, many people ‘never start afresh, but always rebuild, when required to do so, with what they already know and have experienced’.

The second dominant characteristic that can be identified in people’s leisure careers is *loyalty*, which is typically measured by identifying those activities ‘ever done’ by people and the proportion of people who are ‘still doing’ them (Roberts, 2013a). Studies of leisure have revealed that loyalty rates vary – at times considerably so – between activities, with particularly high loyalty rates being reported for the classical arts and other high culture activities most commonly undertaken by those from the middle- and upper-middle class (Bennett et al., 2010; Roberts, 2013a; Warde, 2006). For reasons explained in Chapter 1, in other activities such as sport loyalty rates are much lower, especially for team sports requiring regular degrees of commitment and structure from participants (Coalter, 2013; Lunn et al., 2013; Roberts, 2013a, 2014; Roberts & Brodie, 1992). For other activities, including those which can be undertaken individually and more flexibly (e.g. swimming, running, cycling), or by small groups of players (e.g. golf, badminton), often have much higher loyalty rates and are more likely to be those activities in which larger numbers of people participate within and between major life stages (Coalter, 2007; Green, 2010; Lunn et al., 2013; Roberts & Brodie, 1992). Higher loyalty rates can also be derived from what Stebbins (2007) calls ‘serious leisure’; that is to say, from the longstanding commitment some groups demonstrate to particular activities (including direct sport participation or indirect engagement via sports volunteering) from childhood through subsequent life stages, including into older age, as these activities become a more or less central aspect of their personal and collective identities (Roberts, 2013a).

Both continuity and loyalty in young people's leisure careers in which they construct, at least in part, their self-identities can be identified from surveys of leisure participation and lifestyles (such as the *Taking Part Survey* conducted by the DCMS) which in England are summarised annually in *Social Trends* (e.g. Seddon, 2011). For example, in 2011, it was reported that more than eight-in-ten 16-24-year-olds spent part of their leisure time listening to music (90 per cent), watching television (88 per cent), and visiting family and friends (87 per cent). Using the internet (79 per cent), going to the cinema (72 per cent), shopping (71 per cent) and eating out at restaurants (66 per cent) were also popular uses of leisure time amongst young people, significant proportions of whom also participated in sport and exercise (63 per cent), visited a pub/club (59 per cent) and went on days out (54 per cent) in their leisure time (Seddon, 2011). Gambling is also a popular leisure activity, with two-thirds (65 per cent) of English and Scottish adults aged 16 and above in 2012 having gambled in the past year, with men (68 per cent) being more likely than women (62 per cent) to do so (Wardle et al., 2014). Excluding those who play the National Lottery only, young adults are most likely to gamble, while men were more likely to gamble overall and in most categories including sports events (often in combination with alcohol consumption), and women were more likely to report higher rates of involvement in bingo (Wardle et al., 2014).

The popularity of the internet, in particular, has grown significantly as one of the most widely reported uses of media-oriented leisure with mobile phones, and social media networks such as Facebook and Twitter, being among the new technologies that have encouraged new forms of sociability and enabled young people to structure their leisure time (Feinstein et al., 2006; Furlong, 2013; Mintel, 2013; West et al., 2009).

Indeed, it has been argued that these new technologies have ‘had a profound impact on the leisure lifestyles of young people in all developed societies’ (Furlong, 2013, p. 150), not least because they enable young people to develop and sustain relationships, including on a non-face-to-face basis, with significant others in their highly individualized, increasingly unpredictable and flexible, schedules (Furlong, 2013; West et al., 2009). As Roberts (2004, p. 152) has noted, the use by young people of mobile phones and methods of online communication ‘seem less likely to replace than to add a new dimension to, and maybe facilitate frequent, face-to-face encounters’ during youth as they seek to incorporate new media into their peer-oriented networks. It is also clear, however, that ‘young people construct diverse lifestyles from a mix of different media, rarely if ever making use of just one medium’ (Livingstone, 2002, p. 15). Instead, the use of commercial technologies (such as the internet) and related innovations (including social media) is accommodated within the leisure lives of young people under the constraints they experience from being so interdependent with many other people, and the desire to maintain friendships and engage in peer-based interactions (Feinstein et al., 2006; Hendry et al., 1993; West et al., 2009). The increased use of computer and video games since the late 1980s, in particular, has also been associated with the importance young people often place on engaging with new technologies in peer-oriented settings (Fisher, 2002; West et al., 2009), with males especially said to be spending increasing amounts of their leisure time engaging with other males playing computer games (Biddle et al., 2004; Feinstein et al., 2006; Marshall et al., 2002). Listening to music has also been described as ‘a wide source of everyday leisure for a majority’ (Bennett, 2005, p. 338) of young people, whether as a dedicated leisure activity or as a backdrop to a combination of other pursuits undertaken individually or with others (Bennett, 2005; Livingstone, 2002).

In this regard, it is clear that, perhaps contrary to popular belief, the available data suggest that ‘the leisure lifestyles of many young people are fairly traditional and even mundane, and the activities and lifestyles of the young in all Western societies show a great deal of similarity’ (Furlong, 2013, p. 147). As explained in more detail below, the centrality of sociability and allegiance to peers are also among the motivations for young people’s engagement in other forms of leisure in many countries, including the use of legal and illegal drugs that characterize, to varying degrees, the unfolding leisure lives of youth.

The drug-oriented leisure lifestyles of youth

The findings of many studies in the UK and elsewhere have indicated that, for many but not all young people, the youth life-stage and periods of educational transition are often periods in which many they begin to adopt adult-like, often health-inhibiting, behaviours in their leisure (Aldridge et al., 2011; Kelly et al., 2011; Parker et al., 1998; West, 2009). Among the major uses of leisure that are believed to characterize the youth life-stage is the regular consumption of alcohol, which is perceived as a largely unproblematic, socially-based and friendship-oriented leisure activity on which leisure identities and consumption patterns are built (Hendry et al., 1993; MacDonald & Shildrick, 2007; Smith et al., 2011). As Plant (2009, p. 1) has noted, this is perhaps unsurprising since the consumption of alcohol in Britain has ‘increased rapidly in recent years so that the UK is among the heaviest alcohol consuming countries in Europe’, with 15-16-year-olds reportedly having the highest levels of alcohol consumption in Europe (EMCDDA, 2013; ESPAD, 2009). Indeed, present-day youth in England are reported as drinking twice what they were in 1990 and ‘the amount of alcohol consumed by adolescents aged 11-13 increased substantially

between 1992-2006' (Smith & Foxcroft, 2009, p. 3).

Although the proportion of young people who are drinking alcohol has declined in recent years, 'those who do drink are consuming more alcohol, more often' (Smith & Foxcroft, 2009, p. 3), which for some youth has been shown to begin in the family during mid-adolescence, before developing further in peer-oriented contexts. Indeed, writing in the late 1990s, Foxcroft and Lowe (1997, p. 227) argued that the family is often regarded as 'the primary context for the socialization of drinking behaviour in young people', a view which has been endorsed in other studies of alcohol consumption among pre-teenage children (e.g. McIntosh et al., 2008; Sherriff et al., 2008) and adolescents (e.g. Benites & Schneider, 2014; Katainen & Rolando, 2014; Parker et al., 1998). The role of the family in initiation towards or away from the consumption of alcohol is a complex one which varies by family type and the interaction of multiple social divisions. Studies conducted in countries including Australia (e.g. Habib et al., 2010; Kelly et al., 2011), the Netherlands (Mares et al., 2012), the USA (e.g. Fang et al., 2009), Brazil (e.g. Benites & Schneider, 2014), and the UK (e.g. Eadie et al., 2010; Valentine et al., 2010), have however indicated that 'family factors such as parent-adolescent relationships, family structure (e.g. single-parent versus two-parent homes), and family management (e.g. parental monitoring) are associated with adolescent alcohol use' (Habib et al., 2010, p. 1751). These studies have generally concluded that young people who grow up in families where both biological parents are present, and with whom they develop close emotional relationships, have a tendency to abstain from drinking or drink less during childhood compared to their peers. In addition, it has been shown that children who grow up in

family environments where parents monitor their behaviour and ‘define clear family rules and provide their children with positive reinforcement contribute to the likelihood that their adolescent children drink less alcohol’ (Habib et al., 2010, p. 1751). This, it has been claimed, is more commonly associated with two-parent families than with single-parent families where parental management may be less intense and wide-ranging than in other family types (e.g. Habib et al., 2010; Kelly et al., 2011), while the different relationships children have with their mothers and fathers can play an important role in adolescent alcohol use (Habib et al., 2010).

Parents in the UK have also been regarded as having the most important influence on children’s attitudes towards, and experience of, consuming alcohol (Valentine et al., 2010), while the family home is commonly an important setting in which learning about alcohol consumption first occurs (Eadie et al., 2010; Valentine et al., 2010). In their study of alcohol awareness among pre-teenagers, Eadie et al. (2010) argued that although childhood experiences of alcohol provide important foundations for future drinking habits and many parents (especially mothers) regarded themselves as role models for drinking, it was children from more affluent areas who were less exposed to family occasions where alcohol was consumed, and were much less likely to witness drunkenness in the home, compared to children living in deprived areas. For children growing up in more deprived communities, alcohol was also ‘more integrated into home and family settings, and heavier drinking was generally more accepted’ (Eadie et al. 2010, p. 6), but their more advantaged peers were more likely to be in the presence of alcohol at meal times. In a not dissimilar way, the parents of children aged 5-12-years-old in Valentine et al.’s (2010) study of family drinking

practices felt that introducing their offspring to alcohol in the home or while on holiday was 'safe' and an important part of 'growing up'. How this was undertaken was dependent on the different parenting strategies adopted in different family types, but in many cases parents felt duty-bound to enable their children to make sensible and independent choices in relation to alcohol outside the family home as they got older (Valentine et al., 2010). As the authors noted, for many parents

allowing their children to see them drinking at home was regarded as an important way of modelling openness as a family practice and a more effective strategy for teaching children about drinking within safe limits than laying down strict rules, because parents rationalised that children will always subvert any boundaries that are set. (Valentine et al., 2010, p. 7)

It is important to note, however, that although cross-sectional studies such as this point towards a close association between family environment and alcohol consumption, and that the quality of family relationships and initiation into alcohol consumption is 'related more closely to girls' alcohol use than boys' alcohol use ... there is little research on the extent to which these gender differences hold longitudinally' (Kelly et al., 2011, p. 1428). It is also difficult to draw firm conclusions – as with research on sport participation and family life – about the direction of the association between family factors and alcohol use in early adolescence. In their longitudinal study of the relationship between family emotional climate and increased alcohol use from childhood to mid-adolescence, however, Kelly et al. (2011, p. 1433) found that having an 'emotionally close relationship with mothers was associated with less frequent alcohol use by girls ... and this effect

appeared to operate through reducing girls' exposure to high-risk peer networks'. Parental disapproval of drinking helped protect their children from drinking, especially for boys, and this appeared to operate independently of the peer-oriented networks of which young people were a part between childhood and adolescence. Being a part of peer drinking networks, however, had a much stronger direct impact than family-related factors on whether boys and girls drank when older (Kelly et al., 2011).

Indeed, notwithstanding the significance of family contexts for initiation into alcohol consumption, it is during the secondary school years where the majority of young people develop habituses in which the consumption of alcohol becomes a more common feature of their peer-oriented leisure experiences (Aldridge et al., 2011; Parker et al., 1998; Parker et al., 2002), and in which there tends to be a correlative reduction in close parental control over drinking (Aldridge et al., 2011; Mares et al., 2012). Indeed, in countries such as Britain many young people's lives 'unfreeze' at the end of compulsory schooling (age 16) (Roberts, 2006), and the inherently transitional youth life-stage becomes increasingly characterized by experimentation with a widening range of leisure skills and interests (Hendry et al., 1993; Roberts, 2006). Some leisure activities, including the use of illegal drugs such as cannabis and cocaine, prove to be mini-life-stage phenomena, while the consumption of other drugs (most notably alcohol) can become deeply embedded features of the developing leisure lifestyles of many young people (Aldridge et al., 2011; Parker et al., 2002; West, 2009), including during the transition to university (Winterton & Irwin, 2012; Wrench et al., 2013). The tendency for young people to experiment with a range of

leisure activities, including the consumption of alcohol and illegal drugs, is typically 'associated with their prolonged engagement in education' in which young people experience a felt need to 'fit in' with friends and acquire group membership (MacDonald & Shildrick, 2007; Jeffs & Smith, 1998; Smith et al., 2011; West, 2009). It is also associated with the 'shifting and differentiated leisure experiences and associations' (MacDonald & Shildrick, 2007, p. 350) that characterize young people's lives, and are commonly regarded by the young people involved as *rites de passage* in which they seek to establish greater independence from adults whilst emphasizing peer-allegiance (Aldridge et al., 2011; Hendry et al., 1993; Parker et al., 2002; West, 2009).

University students, in particular, are often thought to spend a significant proportion of their time engaging in risky behaviours in various commercial leisure sites, which are often age-aggregated (such as student pubs and nightclubs) and supported by the growth of commercialized night time leisure economies in which alcohol is a prominent feature (Aldridge et al., 2011; Katainen & Rolando, 2014; West, 2009). Indeed, university students' regular consumption of alcohol (and other drugs) is often perceived as an unremarkable feature of their growing engagement in consumption-oriented leisure, and of their developing lifestyles during the youth to young adulthood transition, including in Canada (e.g. Kwan et al., 2012), the USA (e.g. Borsari & Carey, 2001; Terleki et al., 2014), and the UK (e.g. Clayton & Harris, 2008; Dempster, 2009, 2011; De Visser & Smith, 2007). Summarizing the conclusions of many studies, Kwan et al. (2012, p. 19) have noted that 'the transition into early adulthood represents a time window during which a substantial proportion

of the general population becomes at high risk for a multitude of health-risk behaviors', particularly students who enter HE. As noted earlier, although many students begin consuming alcohol in their mid-teenage years, their increased propensity for drinking has in part been attributed to the roles played by peers in encouraging the consumption of alcohol and to the social contexts of university settings (Borsari & Carey, 2001; Clayton & Harris, 2008; Dempster, 2009, 2011; De Visser & Smith, 2007). This is not altogether surprising because, as Brooks (2007) has observed, becoming part of friendship groups and engaging in peer-oriented activities is central to students' developing sense of self and experience of university life, which for residential students are consolidated by their living arrangements and daily interactions. In the context of drinking alcohol, peer groups are said to be especially important for undergraduates who are often perceived as regarding drinking as a 'normal' part of being a student, and for males as being part of their developing masculine identity and as central to what has been presented as 'laddish' behaviour (Dempster, 2009, 2011).

Like all social groups, however, males (and females) are not a homogenous group who always consume alcohol, or drink to the same extent as their peers, nor do they always have the same motivations for, or experiences of, drinking. In fact, like other members of the population students often express quite contradictory views and recall different experiences of drinking, particularly of binge drinking; the male interviewees in Dempster's (2009, 2011) work, for example, felt drinking was important in constructing masculinity but simultaneously sought to distance themselves from others whose behaviour contravened accepted standards of 'banter'. Significantly, one of the ways in which these students 'attempted to disassociate

themselves from the extremities of drink-induced laddishness was to compare their behaviours more favourably to the drunken thuggishness of the university sports teams' (Dempster, 2011, p. 648). Juxtaposing their heavy alcohol consumption with that of sports team members enabled male students to demonstrate their masculinity to others and facilitated their socialization into male peer groups. 'This was particularly noticeable', Dempster (2011, p. 648) argued, 'within certain men's sports teams who were positioned as "real lads" due, firstly, to these men's apparent ability to drink more than others and, secondly, because their drinking was accompanied by (or caused) other manifestations of laddishness'.

Although the link between sport and alcohol is a longstanding one and drink-related sports subcultures generally started off as a male preserve (Sheard & Dunning, 1973) and have been widely researched (e.g. Clayton & Harris, 2008; Dempster, 2009, 2011; Sheard and Dunning, 1973), some females (especially those involved in team sports) have nevertheless become increasingly involved in such university subcultures (Bryshun & Young, 1999, 2007; Dempster, 2011; King, 2000). Like their male counterparts, females' involvement in alcohol-related sporting subcultures has included weekly social activities and initiation ceremonies, or 'hazings' (Bryshun & Young, 1999, 2007). One study of Canadian university students found that for females, as well as males, these hazings frequently involved the excessive consumption of alcohol (Bryshun & Young, 1999), but there were subtle gender-related differences in both their character and form. In particular, as Bryshun and Young (1999, p. 286-7) have noted:

there were signs that women did not adhere as rigidly as their male counterparts to forms of aggression, dominance and punishment in their initiations ... the overall absence of nudity hint at a somewhat more restrained version of hazing practices among women in this traditionally male-defined arena, but there were exceptions ... in general, however, the articulation of power, status, and identity issues was clear in the hazing rituals of both male and female players.

The gendered character of sports team initiation ceremonies and on-going socialization practices have also been observed in England (King, 2000). Males' initiations more frequently involved nakedness, drinking urine, physical abuse and encouraging novices to vomit on one another before completing physically vigorous assault courses and exercises, but for both genders the singing of songs and financial punishments related to sporting performance, and for contravening social rules, were common (King, 2000).

In addition to the regular consumption of alcohol, the use by young people of illicit drugs is also often regarded as an unremarkable feature of their developing leisure lifestyles, particularly from mid-adolescence and during university (Aldridge et al., 2011; Measham & Shiner, 2009; Parker et al., 1998). Survey data published by the EMCDDA, for example, has consistently indicated that recreational drug use is common in the general population, especially among young males, including those living in England where the present study was conducted (EMCDDA, 2013). Although cannabis use has gradually declined (whilst drugs like cocaine have become more prevalent) amongst 16-24-year-olds since the beginning of the twenty-first

century (EMCDDA, 2013; Measham & Shiner, 2009), it remains the most tried illicit drug by young people. Its use (especially among males) typically ‘increases sharply in the last few years of compulsory education, before reaching a peak shortly thereafter and then falling away’ (Measham & Shiner, 2009, p. 506), with more working-class young people using cannabis and other drugs on a more regular basis than other young people (Aldridge et al., 2011; MacDonald & Shildrick, 2007).

Although the use of cannabis is common among young people and especially university students, rarely is it the case that it acts as a ‘gateway drug’; that is to say, as an initiation into longer-term drug careers characterized by the use of other, more harmful, substances like cocaine (Aldridge et al., 2011; Furlong, 2013). The findings of a study of recreational drug use by 15-16-year-olds in north-west England and north-east Wales, for example, confirmed that far from being widespread and regular, the illicit use of drugs such as cannabis was indicative of the tendency for young people to ‘experiment or dabble with a range of activities without them ever becoming an established feature of their leisure careers’ (Smith et al., 2011, p. 376). As in other studies of drug use (e.g. MacDonald & Shildrick, 2007; Shildrick, 2002), for a minority of young people the regular (often serious) use of drugs such as cannabis was relatively common, but for others usage was considerably less frequent. This was the case not least because ‘tastes for drugs and, for that matter, any leisure activity, ebb and flow as young people negotiate the social situations and friendships in which they find themselves’ (Smith et al., 2011, p. 376), and during the course of which activities such as the use of drugs do not become defining features of leisure lifestyles (MacDonald & Shildrick, 2007; Shildrick, 2002; Smith et al., 2011).

Despite the fact that persistent and regular drug use amongst young people is relatively rare, work undertaken in north-west England suggested that drug use is in effect ‘normalized’; that is to say, drugs such as cannabis are commonly regarded as unremarkable and acceptable features of the consumption-oriented cultural lifestyles adopted by young people in their leisure time, even when those drugs are not commonly used (Aldridge et al., 2011; Parker et al., 1998). This, it has been claimed, is closely associated with the development of several leisure-related processes including:

the growing economic significance of leisure fuelled by the changing political economy of post-industrial societies and marked by the growth of a massively expanding, consumption-oriented night-time economy; that widespread drug use has been encouraged by the emergence of increasingly protracted transitions into adulthood; and that many young people continue to ‘grow out’ of drug use, albeit in ways that reflect the changing nature of adolescence and adulthood. (Measham & Shiner, 2009, p. 507)

Although the degree to which illegal drug use can be considered normalized, including among populations such as university students, remains a contentious issue (e.g. Measham & Shiner, 2009), Shildrick (2002, p. 47) has argued that ‘a more differentiated understanding of normalisation, which allows for the ways in which some types of drugs and some types of drug use may be normalised for some groups of young people’ is required to offer a more nuanced, and fine-grained, analysis of youth leisure lifestyles. In addition, Shildrick has argued, together with MacDonald,

that as an aspect of young people's leisure careers the use of illicit drugs can only be adequately understood in terms of the 'processual, longer-term, complex and multi-dimensional nature of young people's transitions to adulthood' (MacDonald & Shildrick, 2007, p. 342), which are themselves socially structured by inequalities associated with gender, social class, age, and geographical location.

Explaining youth, sport and leisure: theoretical concepts and frameworks

In this and the previous chapter, a number of theoretical concepts and frameworks have informed studies of young people's involvement in sport, leisure and other activities which were of particular relevance for the research undertaken in this thesis. These concepts and frameworks reflect the multi-paradigmatic and multi-disciplinary character of youth studies (especially sociological studies of youth) and, to this end, this thesis endeavoured to draw upon a number of key sensitizing and complementary theoretical concepts to better understand sociologically university students' sport and leisure careers. The final section of this chapter reviews these concepts which will then be deployed in subsequent chapters to explain the data generated by the selected research methods, which are discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.

Habitus, capital and socialization

The concept of habitus has been identified by a number of authors in a number of countries as being central to understanding young people's predispositions towards participation in sport (e.g. Birchwood et al., 2008; Bourdieu, 1978; Engström, 2008; Green, 2014; Haycock & Smith, 2014a; Jakobssen et al., 2012; Lee et al., 2009; Nielsen et al., 2012; Pot et al., 2014; Quarmby & Dagkas, 2010, 2013; Stuij, 2013) and other leisure activities (e.g. Bennett et al., 2010; Bourdieu, 1986; MacDonald &

Shildrick, 2007; Warde, 2006), as well as their engagement in other domains including education (e.g. Ball, 2013; Bodovski, 2014; Hartas, 2014b; Reay, 2001, 2004; Reay et al., 2010). In doing so, it has become commonplace for Bourdieu's conceptualization of habitus (and related notions of capital) to be used as a means of explaining the tastes and preferences people have for sport and other cultural leisure activities. For Bourdieu (1978, 1984), habitus can be used to explain the behaviour of individuals and is regarded as an expression of their unified set of predispositions, values, behaviours and interpretations which are internalized, largely unconsciously, from early childhood and rooted in a specific class position. As he outlined in *Distinction*, Bourdieu (1984) argued that the kind of habitus one acquires is to a large extent dependent on forms of cultural capital which are acquired and accumulated through class relations, and can be 'invested' in various ways to facilitate participation in activities such as sport which perpetuate existing forms of inequality. Cultural capital, Bourdieu (1984) argued, can also be understood to exist in different cultural fields (such as sport, the arts, education) that each have autonomy from other fields and can only be understood in terms of the relationships between those who constitute them. Despite their autonomy, fields are believed to share similar principles whereby those who are able to differentiate themselves from others do so in similar ways (e.g. through class-based investments in cultural capital), whilst also developing distinctive ways of emphasizing difference from others (Bourdieu, 1984). As Bennett et al. (2010, p. 13) have noted:

The fact that he [Bourdieu] was able to show that diverse cultural fields had similar properties, and that they also overlaid each other, so that those who aspired to 'intellectual' positions with respect to (say) music might take up

similar positions with respect to (say) the visual arts, sporting preferences and home decor, is central to his argument that advantage and privilege accumulate in the overlaps and homologies between differentiated fields.

In light of his conceptualization of habitus and field, Bourdieu (1984) argued that habits and inequalities are reproduced by, and inherited (transmitted inter-generationally) through, the class-based practices of those who comprise fields. In the sporting context, these practices can be expressed through the sporting capital (e.g. predispositions, skills, knowledge, literacy) possessed by individuals and others within their networks (especially parents), which as a form of cultural capital (together with physical, economic, and symbolic capital) is especially crucial to the promotion of sport participation during childhood that provides the foundation for involvement in subsequent life stages (Bourdieu, 1978; Pot et al., 2014; Vandermeerschen et al., 2014). According to Pot et al. (2014, p. 2-3), ‘sporting capital which encompasses not only technical aspects (e.g. sport skills, knowledge about rules and tactics) but also socio-cultural aspects (e.g. a network of “sporty” people, knowing the socio-cultural contexts of sports clubs)’ provides the foundation for the development of sporting habituses, which are thus more or less expressions of existing class divisions. As well as developing particular tastes and preferences that generate and sustain class-related inequalities in sport participation (Bourdieu, 1978; Quarmby & Dagkas, 2010, 2013), one example of his reproduction-inheritance thesis is class advantage reproduced in and through the family and formal education (Ball, 2013; Bodovski, 2014; Reay, 2001, 2004; Reay et al., 2010; Reay et al., 2005). For reasons explained earlier, the processes involved in this form of social reproduction – as Bourdieu saw them – include how ‘parents with cultural capital are able to drill

their children in the cultural forms that predispose them to perform well in the educational system through their ability to handle “abstract” and “formal” categories’ (Bennett et al., 2010, p. 13). It is claimed that children are then ‘able to turn their cultural capital into credentials, which can then be used to acquire advantaged positions themselves’ (Bennett et al., 2010, p. 13). A related feature of habitus which had been developed by Reay and colleagues (Reay et al., 2010; Reay et al., 2005) in the sociology of HE is institutional habitus, which they viewed as ‘an intervening variable, providing a semi-autonomous means by which classed, raced and gendered processes are played out in the lives of students and their higher education choices’ (Reay et al., 2005, p. 35). In a further extension of Bourdieu’s concept of habitus, Reay et al. (2010, p. 109) argued that the conception of institutional habitus

would similarly constitute a complex amalgam of agency and structure and could be understood as the impact of a cultural group or social class on an individual’s behaviour as it is mediated through an organisation ... Institutional habituses, no less than individual habituses, have a history and have in most cases been established over time. They are, therefore, capable of change but by dint of their collective nature are less fluid than individual habitus.

Notwithstanding the contribution Bourdieu’s conceptualization of habitus has made to an understanding of class-based cultural practices and how these are reproduced in and through the activities of dominant groups, it has not been without criticism (for a review, see Bennett et al., 2010). Although it is not possible to review all these criticisms in detail here, it is worth noting that although social class remains an important social division which helps shape people’s life chances, ‘class does not

always count more than gender or ethnicity. It depends on what the issues are. Distinctive forms of cultural capital are also associated with gender, ethnic and age divisions, which interact with each other and with class-based forms' (Bennett al., 2010, p. 2). In this regard, it has been claimed that Bourdieu's view of habitus as being linked to class position is overly deterministic and underplays how 'class, gender, age and ethnicity interact in the processes of person formation' (Bennett et al., 2010, p. 3), which is a dynamic and contested process that is not sufficiently captured in Bourdieu's more static conceptualization of habitus (Stuij, 2013). It has also been argued that in focusing on the upper middle-class in France during the 1960s and 1970s, Bourdieu failed to take sufficient account of the ways in which his analysis could also help explain the cultural participation of other groups, and to identify precisely what form cultural capital (acquisition, accumulation and investment) takes in each of these contexts. In addition, by focusing almost exclusively 'on those aspects of the tastes and patterns of cultural participation that most distinguish a particular class from other classes' (Bennett et al., 2010, p. 27) he overlooked how the tastes and practices of a particular class are shared with the members of other social classes. These have been demonstrated in the cultural omnivorousness associated with participation in various leisure activities (e.g. Bennett et al., 2010; Warde, 2006), and sport in particular (e.g. Widdop & Cutts, 2013; Widdop et al., 2014). Thus, how, in what form, for what purposes, and with what outcomes particular social groupings invest in cultural and other forms of capital needs to be reflected more adequately in analyses of cultural participation (Bennett et al., 2010; Widdop et al., 2014), while how these vary for individuals and the networks of which they are a part also requires closer investigation.

Although the theoretical development of habitus as a sociological concept is most closely associated with the work of Bourdieu (Bennett et al., 2010; Dunning and Hughes, 2013), it is also central to the work of other sociologists including the figurational sociology of Norbert Elias (Dunning & Hughes, 2013; Elias, 2000; Elias & Scotson, 1994). There are many similarities between Bourdieu's conceptualization of habitus and that of Elias (see Dunning & Hughes, 2013; Goodwin & O'Connor, 2009; O'Connor & Goodwin, 2012; van Krieken, 1998), and 'there is much in Bourdieu's work that is compatible with the work of Elias' more generally (Dunning & Hughes, 2013, p. 200). In relation to habitus, however, Elias sought to move away from what he saw as the overemphasis Bourdieu placed upon bodily habitus in favour of a more generalized conception of habitus (Dunning & Hughes, 2013; van Krieken, 1998). For Elias, habitus refers to a person's 'second nature' or 'embodied social learning' acting as an 'automatic, blindly functioning apparatus of self-control' (Elias, 2000, p. 368) that develops within the historically produced and reproduced relational networks (or human figurations) of which they are a part, and which stretch across generations. It was Elias's (2000) contention that each person develops their own individual and unique habitus as well as a series of social or group habituses – such as gender habituses – that are shared with others who have been habituated through similar experiences. In this regard, the Eliasian conceptualization of habitus, it has been argued, moves away from the class determinism which besets Bourdieu's analysis (discussed earlier) and has greater capacity to account for how other sources of social division, including gender, age and ethnicity can indeed interact in processes of person formation (Bennett et al., 2010).

It was noted earlier that while Bourdieu (1984) rightly pointed to the ways in which

processes of habitus formation (albeit narrowly focused along class lines) are important for understanding cultural participation, he paid rather less attention to how habitus changes over the life course and how this becomes expressed in tastes and preferences for particular activities (Bennett et al., 2010). This is important because, as Reay et al. (2005, p. 26) have observed, ‘although the habitus is a product of early childhood experience, and in particular socialization within the family, it is continually modified by individuals’ encounters with the outside world’. Thus, Elias sought to demonstrate how the organization of psychological make-up into a habitus is a dynamic process that begins at birth and continues throughout a person’s life as the changing figurations in which people find themselves become more or less complex, and are perceived as more or less compelling (Dunning & Hughes, 2013; van Krieken, 1998). It is childhood and youth, however, which for Elias (2000) typically constitute the most impressionable phase of habitus formation and development. Indeed, childhood and youth have been shown in figurationally-informed studies to be especially significant and impressionable life stages (Goodwin & O’Connor, 2009; O’Connor & Goodwin, 2012) where sporting habits and predispositions become deeply embedded and internalized in sport participants’ emerging habituses, or personality structures (Green, 2010; Haycock & Smith, 2014b, 2014), which are in turn associated with socialization processes (Green, 2010; Lareau, 2011).

As other studies reviewed earlier have indicated, during the life course the relative influence of key socializing groups moves from parents’ attempts (during primary socialization) to engage variously in concerted cultivation (Lareau, 2011) more towards other extended family members, friends and peers, and other social networks

(during secondary socialization) in dynamic, reciprocal and contingent ways (Green, 2010; Haycock & Smith, 2014a, 2014b). Thus, for Elias, the historical character of habitus – which stretches between generations and within a person’s lifetime – is inextricably tied to the increasing interdependence of human beings and the processual nature of growing up from childhood through to adulthood and older age (Dunning & Hughes, 2013; Elias, 2001; van Krieken, 1998). In other words, Elias endeavoured to

‘stretch’ our understanding of habitus and the person over the whole period of any individual’s biography, from the absolute dependence of a newborn infant, through the gradual acquisition of relative independence as an adult, and then the greater dependence of old age. (van Krieken, 1998, p. 154)

The significance of conceptualizing young people in terms of their interdependence with others and the youth life-stage as a social process is explored in more detail next.

The youth life-stage: biography, career and increased interdependence

To understand people’s participation in sport and leisure, it is important to understand the developments and trajectories of participation over the life course as their relational networks (or figurations) lengthen and incorporate an increasing number and variety of social groups whom they may or may not know on a face-to-face and non-face-to-face basis (Dunning & Hughes, 2013; Elias, 1978; Green, 2010). Conceptualizing social relationships in terms of figurations, or networks of interdependencies, it has been argued enables the researcher to examine what has been conventionally termed ‘the interplay between structure and agency in young

people's lives' (Miles, 2000, p. 32). To avoid representing people (such as university students) and the wider society of which they are a part statically as 'two different entities separated by a broad chasm or an unbridgeable antithesis' (Elias, 2001, p. 87), however, the concept of the figuration enables the researcher to trace changes in individual biographies (that is, people's agency) and careers (related to changes in the social structure) in successive life stages. In particular, Elias sought to overcome the tendency to present people as if they are each *Homo clausus* – that is, freely acting individuals who somehow exist independently of each other and 'outside' of the 'society' they help comprise (Dunning & Hughes, 2013; Elias, 1978), by introducing the concept of the human figuration which he described as 'a structure of mutually oriented and dependent people' (Elias, 2000, p. 316). Conceptualized in this way, the concept of figurations is premised on the view that it is only possible to understand human beings as *Homines aperti*, that is, as interdependent people who 'can only be properly understood as pluralities, and not as isolated individual "actors" who variously "interact" with other "individuals", "groups", "organisations", or "social institutions"' (Dunning & Hughes, 2013, p. 53).

The concept of figurations is also 'predicated upon an understanding of the fundamental interdependence of human beings, first in their biology, and then through their socially developed reciprocal needs' (Dunning & Hughes, 2013, p. 53), and is oriented towards better understanding the processual character of human societies and of phenomena, including the development of sport and leisure careers, among individuals and other members of their figurations. In other words, by conceptualizing 'society' as interdependent people in the plural, and 'individuals' (such as university students) as interdependent people in the singular, the concept of figurations may thus

help to provide a more adequate understanding of people's lives and their participation in sport and leisure in terms of the networks of interdependencies in which they find themselves (Dunning & Hughes, 2013; Elias, 1978).

Alongside the increasing interdependence that characterizes people's lives is the interrelated process of individualization – of lifestyles, biographies and identities (Elias, 2001) – which occurs in the context of social relationships with others, and along key lines of social division (e.g. gender, age, ethnicity, location) in a process of what Roberts et al. (1994) refer to as 'structured individualization'. In other words, although people value their ability to 'stand out' from others by emphasizing their individuality and difference (Elias, 2001; Miles, 2000; Roberts, 1996), they are constrained to do so within the constraints of their individual biographies and interdependence with others. This is because how people seek to develop their individualized selves can only be undertaken in relation to others within the wider social relationships of which they are a part (Elias, 1978); that is to say, people are simultaneously required to strike 'a delicate balancing act between the construction of individuality and relationships constructed in groups' (Miles, 2000, p. 24). The process of individualization also occurs in conjunction with wider social processes that provide the context within which various activities (e.g. sport and leisure) can be chosen to help construct individualized biographies and lifestyles as part of the wider formation of individual and group habitus (Dunning, 2002; Dunning & Hughes, 2013; Roberts, 1996). Thus, as van Krieken (1998, p. 55; emphases in the original) observes, for figurational sociologists, social life can only be adequately understood when people are 'conceptualised as *interdependent* rather than autonomous, comprising what [Elias] called *figurations* rather than social systems or structures,

and as characterised by socially and historically specific forms of *habitus*, or personality structure' which help constitute the social processes through which activities such as sport and leisure develop.

Summary

This chapter has attempted to trace the processes involved in the changing nature of the life course and the importance of life transitions since the 1970s, and its implications for how young people engage in sport and leisure during the youth life-stage. It has also sought to identify some of the pertinent features of young people's leisure careers and biographies which, it was argued, provide an important backdrop for understanding the interrelated aspects of young people's sporting lifestyles and the foundations (namely, family, childhood socialization, and education) on which these are invariably based and which are relatively fixed by age 16. The chapter has also reviewed some of the key theoretical ideas that have so far been deployed in the sociological study of youth sport and leisure, and which provide the key sensitizing theoretical concepts and frameworks which guide the analysis of the data presented in subsequent chapters. In particular, undertaken within a figurationally-informed framework, the present study draws upon a number of interrelated theoretical concepts to help explain university students' sport and leisure careers, including the concepts of figurations and interdependence, *habitus* and socialization, individualization, and youth as a social process. In doing so, the study seeks to answer three key research questions which have emerged from the critical review of literature presented in this and the previous chapter. These are:

- (i) What effect, if any, does HE have on students' sport participation?
- (ii) To what extent do students' sport and leisure careers explain their present-day participation? and
- (iii) How might the relationship between students' sport and leisure careers be explained sociologically?

The next chapter outlines the selection of two research methods – structured and semi-structured interviews – that were used to generate data that helped to answer these questions.

Chapter Three

Research Methodology

Introduction

The objective of this chapter is to discuss some of the major premises and principles of social research methodology and how these related to the present study. More specifically, the chapter: (i) discusses some of the conventional debates associated with social research methodology and how the researcher positions himself according to the main research paradigms; (ii) justifies the selection of the two methods – structured and semi-structured interviews – as part of a cross-sectional mixed-methods research design; (iii) explains how the research was undertaken in two main phases with students from two universities in England; (iv) describes how students were recruited to the study, for what means, and with what outcomes; and (v) concludes by outlining the process of data analysis and limitations of the study.

Methodological approaches to research

Research paradigms: the quantitative-qualitative divide

Before outlining the research design, methods, sample and data analysis conducted as part of this study, it is worth outlining the researcher's ontological (beliefs regarding the nature of human existence) and epistemological (what constitutes more or less adequate knowledge and how this knowledge is developed) position to the study of human relations. In doing so, it is first necessary to discuss the conventional divisions said to exist between the three main approaches associated with social science research, namely, quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods research. As Johnson et al. (2007) have noted, the roots of the differences between these approaches to social

research date can be traced back to debates about the existence of singular or multiple truths of the social world which were found in ancient Western philosophy, and which are said to underpin the three main approaches to research. This debate continues to characterize how we view knowledge, what we seek to find as evidence, the findings we anticipate, and how we research and justify the ‘knowledge’ we generate (Johnson et al., 2007).

Throughout the twentieth century, it has been well documented in discussions of the so-called ‘paradigm wars’ that the divide between that qualitative and quantitative research is grounded in a belief that the two have contrasting ontological and epistemological assumptions (Brannen, 2005; Bryman, 2014; Maxwell, 2010). For example, quantitative researchers are conventionally thought to conform to an ontological view of the social world as an entity that exists separately from human beings and can therefore be studied objectively. Qualitative researchers, on the other hand, are traditionally said to hold an ontological view in which social reality is socially constructed, based on subjective interpretations, and which suggests that multiple realities of the social world exist (Hesse-Biber, 2010).

Researchers who subscribe to the ontological assumption that the social world can be understood objectively are said to adopt a positivist epistemological stance to social research, and use so-called quantitative research methods (for example, structured interviews) to collect knowledge of social reality and analyse ‘hard’ data objectively in a similar way to the natural sciences (Bryman, 2014; Hesse-Biber, 2010; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2005). Quantitative researchers are thus thought to adopt a deductive approach to social research that seeks to test the explanatory adequacy of

existing social theory to the study of particular social phenomena. At the opposite end of this epistemological continuum, qualitative researchers have been positioned as advocating an interpretivist epistemological approach towards research and select research methods (for example, semi-structured interviews) that actively seek to promote the voices of their participants, and generate data on the subjective interpretations they give of their experiences (Brannen, 2005; Hesse-Biber, 2010). The alleged focus by qualitative researchers on generating ‘rich’ subjective data from undertaking research with people relates to their preference for adopting an inductive approach towards the relationship between theory and research data (Bryman, 2014; Maxwell, 2010; Morgan, 2014). More particularly, since qualitative researchers adopt a view that the world is socially constructed through people’s interpretations and perceptions, they argue that we can only seek to understand and generate theories of the world inductively through the views and experiences of social actors themselves (Bryman, 2014; Maxwell, 2010; Morgan, 2014).

Notwithstanding the longstanding tendency for some researchers – referred to by some as ‘paradigm warriors’ (Johnson et al., 2007) – to emphasize the existence of the above distinctions between quantitative and qualitative research, it has been claimed that these distinctions are, at best, ‘high questionable’ (Schwandt, 2000), and at worst entirely unfounded, the main reasons for which are discussed in more detail next.

Problems with the conventional quantitative-qualitative dichotomy

Many authors have argued that the separate conceptualization of research paradigms into either quantitative or qualitative approaches represents something of a false

dichotomy. Indeed, it has long been suggested that the division of these two research approaches is no longer useful in aiding our understanding of the human condition, and that the claimed differences and strong debates between advocates of each of these approaches in the literature are said to be unproductive (Johnson et al., 2007; Maxwell, 2010; Newman & Benz, 1998; Schwandt, 2000). Simultaneously, however, some of these authors have also argued that despite the lines between qualitative, quantitative and pragmatist (reviewed in more detail below) research paradigms being ‘*much fuzzier*’ (Johnson et al., 2007, p. 117) than is often suggested, identifying these research paradigms can be a useful means of recognizing ‘three general clusters of methodological and philosophical positions’ (Johnson et al., 2007: 117). Nevertheless, Johnson et al. (2007) and others (e.g. Bergman, 2008; Brannen, 2005; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2005) argue that the premises that underpin the conventional quantitative-qualitative divide are highly questionable on the basis of at least four key problems.

Firstly, in addition to the misleading tendency to present quantitative and qualitative research approaches as a dichotomy, it is also common for some researchers to misrepresent these research approaches and their associated methods synonymously (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2005). Indeed, Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2005) have argued that much of the quantitative-qualitative debate has tended to focus on the labelling of different methods as either quantitative or qualitative in nature. A more adequate conceptualization of the relationship between quantitative and qualitative research, they suggest, is to view these two approaches as opposite ends of a research continuum (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2005), and to acknowledge that in practice all research involves a blend of both which changes depending on the research questions being addressed and how the methods selected to answer them are deployed at

different stages of the research process (Brannen, 2005; Bryman, 2012). For example, research questions associated with measuring the amount, frequency or time people dedicate to participating in sport are likely to be more appropriately addressed by employing structured interviews or questionnaires, whereas those associated with addressing the intricacies, experiences and explanations for people's (lack of) participation are more likely to be captured by more flexible, participant-centred, methods such as semi-structured or unstructured interviews. This does not mean, however, that researchers adopting these methods are bound to generating or analysing data that is either purely quantitative or qualitative. This is because research methods are merely tools to be used to generate data and it is a researcher's methodology – which is informed not only by their ontological and epistemological position, but several other practical considerations (see Brannen, 2005; Bryman, 2014) – that determines what and how research methods are used (Hesse-Biber, 2010; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2005). The researcher in this study would thus be inclined to agree with Bryman's (2014, p. 122) suggestion 'that research methods can serve different epistemological masters' and 'it is the way in which they are used that influences their epistemological location'.

Secondly, it has been claimed that the inherent differences between quantitative and qualitative research paradigms refer to the ways in which, respectively, one makes use of numerical data while the other focuses on written data in the form of words (Brannen, 2005; Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2011). This has traditionally often 'been the major criterion for distinguishing between quantitative and qualitative research' (Maxwell, 2010, p. 476), since these approaches can be divided in terms of the numerical and non-numerical data they generate. As Maxwell (2010, p. 476;

emphases in the original) has noted, such a ‘distinction is also conveyed by the terms *hard* and *rich* data and is implicit in the charge of “imprecision” that has been levelled against qualitative methods’. Nevertheless, despite these claims based on the kinds of data generated, analysed and reported on as findings among quantitative and qualitative researchers, it is well documented that both groups of researchers can and often do make use of numerical and non-numerical data that aids our understanding of human relationships (Maxwell, 2010; Schwandt, 2007). For example, in drawing on the work of Becker, Maxwell (2010, p. 476; emphases in the original) has noted that

qualitative researchers frequently make quantitative claims in verbal form, using terms such as *many*, *often*, *typically*, *sometimes*, and so on. He [Becker] argued that numbers have the value of making such claims more precise and coined the term *quasi statistics* for simple counts of things to support terms such as *some*, *usually*, and *most*.

The problems involved with discussing the conventional differences between quantitative and qualitative research approaches in the above terms are closely related to a third problem: the tendency for ‘paradigm warriors’ (Johnson et al., 2007) to over emphasize the differences between them at the expense of the similarities (Brannen, 2005; Johnson et al., 2007; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2005). In this regard, while it would seem fair to suggest that each approach may typically be more closely associated with a particular ontological and epistemological position, as well as certain methods and data, there are at least as many overlaps across these approaches than differences (Hammersley, 1992). Indicative of this suggestion is that although it is often claimed that quantitative researchers are concerned with behaviour while

qualitative studies focus on meaning, this is open to question since both may be concerned 'with people's views and actions' (Brannen, 2005, p. 175). Furthermore, at the outset of research, the goal of researchers who may fall into one of the two research approaches is to make use of observations to address their particular research questions. On this basis, as part of the research process, quantitative and qualitative researchers both 'describe their data, construct explanatory arguments from their data, and speculate about why the outcomes they observed happened as they did' (Sechrest & Sidani, as cited in Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2005, p. 379). Indeed, given the similarities in the objectives and nature of inquiry across both approaches, it has been suggested that it is illogical for a researcher to restrict her/himself to a single arbitrary methodology and its conventional methods, especially when there seems to be no convincing case to do so and when the use of both provides them with an opportunity to draw on the best of both approaches (Hesse-Biber, 2010; Truscott et al., 2010). More pointedly, Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2005, p. 381) have argued that

the purity of a research paradigm is a function of the extent to which the researcher is prepared to conform to its underlying assumptions. If differences exist between quantitative and qualitative researchers, these discrepancies do not stem from different goals but because these two groups of researchers have operationalized their strategies differently for reaching these goals.

The fourth and final problem associated with the quantitative-qualitative divide that will be discussed here is the claimed link between quantitative research and deductive logic on the one hand, and qualitative research and inductive inquiry on the other. Although this simplistic association is often said to lie at the centre of justifications

for keeping research paradigms separate, in practice both quantitative and qualitative research use both forms of logic (Brannen, 2005; Maxwell, 2010). Such a shift between both inductive and deductive approaches to research is inevitable over the duration of any research study as the researcher is subjected to the unavoidable interdependence between theory and methods (Brannen, 2005; Elias, 1978). Conceptualizing quantitative and qualitative approaches in terms of a false dichotomy is unhelpful because it encourages researchers to view the relationship between theory and methods as a static one where one should be prioritized over the other (Brannen, 2005; Elias, 1978).

Consequently, it is more adequate to conceptualize this relationship as a continuum on which the researcher's logic will shift throughout the research process as a result of the continuous and reciprocal cross-fertilization between theory and methods (Brannen, 2005; Elias, 1978). There are a number of practical research examples to support this more adequate conceptualization of the relationship between both research approaches. For example, while it is often emphasized by both quantitative and qualitative researchers that qualitative data are not collected but are the result of an interpretive process, this is also true of quantitative approaches. More specifically, as Sandelowski et al. (2009, p. 212) have noted, while 'counting is usually taken for granted as a mundane and transposable process and, thereby as an objective and transparent process not requiring much scrutiny', like so-called quantitative research more generally, what is counted, and how it is categorized and explained, is undoubtedly subject to the researcher's informed interpretation (Brannen, 2005; Maxwell, 2010). Finally, although it is often argued that qualitative research lacks generalizability that can be better achieved by adopting a deductive approach to the

research process, this claim is only valid if generalizability is defined by statistical testing and whether statistically significant findings can be regarded as being generalizable to the parent population (Brannen, 2005). If not defined by statistical testing, therefore, qualitative findings may also be judged to be generalizable because they may be indicative of other patterns of human relationships in different research contexts, or they may provide ‘theoretical generalization’ where the theoretical insights generated by a particular research project may enhance understanding of other social issues (Brannen, 2005).

Despite the obvious overlaps between quantitative and qualitative research approaches, it is worth noting that some authors who offer similar critiques of this divide continue to acknowledge that the division of research paradigms is useful in illuminating some common methodological tendencies among social researchers (Johnson et al., 2007; Maxwell, 2010). Nevertheless, there are many others (Bergman, 2008; Maxwell, 2010) who support the claim that research paradigms are merely a function of researchers’ willingness to conform to their underlying assumptions (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2005). This willingness to conform has meant debates about the quantitative-qualitative debate frequently involve ‘the practice of polemics, which has tended to obfuscate rather than to clarify, and to divide rather than to unite educational researchers’ (Onwuegbuzie, 2003, p. 394).

While the continued existence of both research paradigms is clear evidence that the methodological issues associated with them are still the subject of much debate, increased pressure for research to be relevant in practical and policy terms may have contributed towards the trend away from specializing in quantitative or qualitative

research, a ‘vanishing from view’ of epistemological issues involved in conducting research, and a reduction of methodological issues to ‘skills and training’ (Brannen, 2005, p. 175). Trends of this kind, and the apparent limitations of the arguments that underpin the so-called quantitative-qualitative divide, have contributed to the growing support for ensuring that research questions, rather than epistemological and ontological commitments, should determine the selection of research methods deemed most appropriate to a particular investigation (Brannen, 2005; Bryman, 2014; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2005). As Bryman (2006, p. 97) has noted, some authors have expressed an ‘unease about the “whatever works” position that underpins’ such an approach, but the mixing of qualitative and quantitative research methods has nevertheless become popular since the late 1980s. The growing popularity of mixed approaches to research has resulted in the emergence of a third research paradigm often labelled ‘mixed methods research’ (Johnston et al., 2007). It is this research paradigm that best captures the methodological approach adopted in this study and will be discussed in more detail next.

The third research paradigm: mixed methods research

The philosophy of pragmatism and mixed methods

The initial popularity of mixed methods research, which emerged over two decades ago, occurred during a period when the justification of any social research paradigm would have to have been underpinned by explicit assumptions regarding a particular view on the philosophy of knowledge. In this context, the increased adoption of a mixed methods approach to social science research was met simultaneously with significant resistance, particularly from researchers engaged in debates over the quantitative-qualitative divide who were often critical of mixed methods research for

telling others ‘nothing about their ontology or epistemology’ (Lincoln, 2010, p. 7). According to Morgan (2014), an understanding of the initial reception by researchers of mixed methods approaches to a large degree helps explain the emergence of the pragmatist paradigm and its association with mixed methods research (Morgan, 2014). For most mixed methods researchers, Morgan (2014) argues, the appeal of the paradigm lies not in its broader philosophical basis, but in its practical focus and the opportunity it provides to utilize the strengths and minimize the limitations of quantitative and qualitative approaches. These historical roots, together with the close association between pragmatism and mixed methods research and the practical dimension of the pragmatist paradigm, are said to have contributed to the narrow conception of pragmatism as a philosophy based on its practicality and the misleading view that it is uniquely related to mixed methods research (Morgan, 2014).

A more adequate understanding of pragmatism as a philosophical approach can be summarized by a brief discussion of how it may be viewed as an alternative to the ‘older approaches to the philosophy of knowledge’ that ‘understand social research in terms of ontology, epistemology and methodology’ (Morgan, 2014, p. 1045). For those favouring a more pragmatist approach to research, Morgan (2014) contends that social science research is better regarded as contextual human experience that does not occur in a social vacuum and is based on the views and actions of researchers, rather being preoccupied by abstract philosophical debates about ontology, epistemology and methodology. This, however, does not mean to suggest that pragmatism considers more traditional approaches to be ‘wrong’; rather, advocates of pragmatism are said to appreciate older approaches ‘as a set of beliefs and actions that were uniquely important within a given set of circumstances’, while advocating that

more recent and different circumstances warrant ‘a new methodological agenda’ (Morgan, 2014, p. 1051). In this regard, Dewey and other proponents of pragmatism are said to have avoided dichotomous ontological arguments about the nature of the social world by conceptualizing our experiences as being unavoidably shaped by a blend of both the structural nature of the social world and our personal interpretations and experiences of it (Morgan, 2014). In other words, authors such as Dewey have suggested that ‘ontological arguments about either the nature of the outside world or the world of our conceptions’ were a debate ‘about two sides of the same coin’ (Morgan, 2014, p. 1048). Accordingly, following Dewey, many pragmatists are said to argue that there is a need for a new methodological approach which involves moving the conceptualization of social science research methodology away from abstract philosophical beliefs towards beliefs that are grounded in the actions and thoughts of researchers (Morgan, 2014). Doing so requires not only an examination of what researchers do and why they do them, but also the things that influence the choices researchers make and how the outcomes of these choices are interpreted (Morgan, 2014). Having examined the three main social research paradigms and their associated methods, it is worth briefly reflecting upon some of the common approaches and justifications for conducting mixed methods research of the kind employed in this study.

Selecting and employing a mixed methods approach

As with all mixed methods research, the present study involved the combination of both ‘quantitative’ and ‘qualitative’ research methods (discussed in more detail below). The increasing acceptance of mixed methods research over the last decade or so has somewhat shifted concerns away from the perceived incompatibility of

‘quantitative’ and ‘qualitative’ data towards a lack of data integration often being ‘regarded as a problem that needs to be addressed’ (Bryman, 2014, p. 123). More recent concerns of this kind have been associated with the broader issue of what constitutes good-quality mixed methods research (Bryman, 2014), an issue which has encouraged the development of what Creswell (2011, p. 278) has described as a ‘baffling array’ of research designs associated with mixed methods research. To help conceptualize these research designs more adequately, Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) differentiate between: convergent; explanatory; exploratory; embedded; transformative; and multi-phase designs. These broad typologies, they add, represent a useful means of articulating as accurately as possible the kind of mixed methods research design adopted in a given study (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Of the typologies presented by Creswell and Plano Clark (2011), the present study is most adequately described as adopting an explanatory research design not least because, as explained below, following the completion of structured interviews in Phase One of the study semi-structured interviews were then employed to provide students with the opportunity to help explain the patterns of behaviour identifiable from the more quantitative data generated by the structured interviews on their sport and leisure careers.

In discussing what are commonly regarded as being amongst the features of good-quality mixed methods research, Bryman (2014, p. 124) has noted how the ‘quality criteria for mixed methods research sometimes shows signs of going in a similar direction [to research designs for mixed methods] whereby we end up with long lists of quality considerations’. To help avoid doing so, Bryman (2014, p. 125) has proposed six quality criteria for conducting good-quality mixed methods research

which informed the justification and explanation of the mixed methods design deployed in the present study, and which can be summarized as follows:

- 1) Need for quantitative and qualitative competency whereby researchers adhere to the ‘quality expectations of both quantitative and qualitative research’.
- 2) Need for transparency in the research design and process, which describes the phasing of the quantitative and qualitative components and how the data generated were used in relation to each other.
- 3) Need for each research method should be linked to the research questions they have been employed to address.
- 4) Need to be explicit about the type of mixed method design employed, while also remaining cognisant of the complex reality of the research process that is likely to require detailed additional information about the phasing of different components.
- 5) Need for a clear rationale for employing a mixed methods research design, which, among other things, may relate to sampling, obtaining a more adequate understanding and using different methods to address different questions.
- 6) Need for integration. Good quality mixed methods research will avoid the different components existing parallel to each other and instead where appropriate allow the data to ‘talk to each other’. For example, in cases where qualitative data can be used to help explain and expand on quantitative findings.

Having briefly reviewed the major debates associated with the quantitative, qualitative and pragmatist approaches to research, it is important to acknowledge

where the researcher positions himself in relation the debates associated with these paradigms. The researcher believes that social science research methodologies should be guided by adopting the most appropriate methods available to answer the research questions set in a given context. An ideological commitment to either qualitative or quantitative research, it is argued, only limits the number and kinds of research problems perceived as being possible to research, but also limits the degree to which we are able to generate different kinds of data on particular social issues and by denying the potential for ‘talk’ between different kinds of data. As other authors have argued (Brannen, 2005; Bryman, 2006; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2005; Truscott et al., 2010), it is the researcher’s view that different kinds of methods are more or less appropriate for different studies, that seek to address different research questions, in different contexts, with different participants, and these factors should be the focus of debates on research designs and selection of research methods, not purely those associated with the philosophy of knowledge.

From this position, the mixed methods design employed in this study sought to address different types of questions that permit the analysis of any effect that attending HE has on students’ present-day sport participation and the inter-relationships between their sport and leisure careers. Although mixed methods research is not, and should not, be treated as a one-size fits all approach to social research and always requires careful consideration and appropriate justification (Brannen, 2005; Bryman, 2006; Fielding, 2010), the researcher in this study endeavoured to utilize the strengths of both ‘quantitative’ and ‘qualitative’ research (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2005) in a manner consistent with the fundamental premises of pragmatism (Morgan, 2014).

Research design

In common with ‘a great deal of youth research’ (Heath et al., 2009, p. 16), a mixed methods, cross-sectional, explanatory research design underpinned by the premises of pragmatism was employed in this study to help answer the specified research questions. It is important to note, however, that while cross-sectional, the study injected a biographical dimension into the study of university students’ sporting and leisure careers using the retrospective method, which has been advocated and used in other studies of leisure (e.g. Hendry et al., 2002; MacDonald & Shildrick, 2007; Roberts et al., 2009). This is because, as Roberts (2003, p. 27) has noted, youth research ‘needs to be longitudinal in perspective even when the methods are snapshot. Youth is an inherently transitional life stage, so all studies need to engage with how their subjects’ lives are changing’. In their study of socially excluded young people in north-east England, for example, MacDonald and Shildrick (2007, p. 342) noted that approaching the study of young people’s lives developmentally enabled them to better capture ‘the processual, longer-term, complex and multidimensional nature of young people’s transitions to adulthood’.

As in MacDonald and Shildrick’s research, the use of retrospective recall in the present study helped examine students’ changing personal circumstances and life situations within the wider cultural, social and historical contexts in which students live. More particularly, this approach enabled the researcher to analyse students’ unfolding careers during the critical life-stage associated with the transitions they make from youth to young adulthood that typically coincides with their engagement in university life. The commitment to understanding students’ lives developmentally was thus vital in facilitating the analysis of students’ sporting and leisure careers, for

without adopting this approach the study would have presented a one-sided, misleading and present-centred picture of the social processes associated with participation in sport and leisure.

Research phase one: structured interviews

As Bryman (2012, p. 210) has noted, the structured interview (sometimes known as the standardized interview) involves ‘the administration of an interview schedule by an interviewer’ the aim of which is ‘for all interviewees to be given exactly the same context of questioning’. The ‘goal’ of this style of interviewing, Bryman (2012, p. 210) adds, is ‘to ensure that interviewees’ replies can be aggregated, and this can be achieved reliably only if those replies are in response to identical cues’. To ensure interviewees’ replies can indeed be aggregated in this way requires the interviewer to read out the questions (which are usually closed-ended or fixed choice) exactly as they are written, and in the same order, as they appear on the interview schedule (Bryman, 2012). It also requires the researcher to minimize the degree to which intra-interviewer variability impacts on the data generated by the structured interview. This is a particularly important feature of structured interviewing because

we want to be able to say as far as possible that the variation we find is connected with true variation between interviewees and not to variation in the way a question was asked or the answers recorded in the course of the administration of a survey by structured interview. (Bryman, 2012, p. 211)

For these reasons, structured interviews are used very widely in survey research, often when generating large amounts of data on various aspects of people’s lives. In the

sporting context, perhaps one of the most well-known structured interviews used in recent years is the *Active People Survey* introduced by Sport England in 2005/6 to generate data on participation in sport and cultural activities (see Rowe, 2009), while structured interviews have for a long time been amongst the most widely used instruments in leisure research (including time use surveys) (Roberts, 2012).

As has often been the case with previous studies of sport and leisure involving structured interviews (see Roberts, 2014; Roberts & Brodie, 1992; Roberts et al., 2009), the main objective of the seven-part structured interview (Appendix A) in this study was to generate largely quantitative data on students' participation (i.e. the kinds, forms, levels and rates of participation) in a variety of sport and leisure activities undertaken currently, and in the past, to reflect the multi-dimensional nature of their lives. In other words, the quantitative data produced by the structured interviews were used to explore the interrelated nature of students' various career pathways in sport and leisure to understand more adequately the changing nature of their lives as they pass through youth and into young adulthood.

The standardized, largely closed-ended, questions asked in the structured interviews were based upon the findings of, and approaches undertaken in, published studies of sport and leisure reviewed in Chapter 1 (e.g. Bennett et al., 2010; Roberts, 2014; Roberts and Brodie, 1992). Of particular importance, however, was the degree to which the researcher sought to inform the design and structure of the interview schedule with items, questions, and categories from other pre-existing surveys in which structured interviews are the primary method of generating relevant data. For example, the lists of sports from which students were required to identify their

participatory profiles were informed by those activities included in the APS by Sport England, and which were complemented by those sports and leisure activities featured in the *General Household Survey*. Questions on students' use of digital media and other cultural leisure activities were derived from those included in the annual *Taking Part Survey* published by the DCMS, while data on students' educational background, residential status and other aspects of university life were generated by questions which addressed key variables included in the SOMUL study by Brennan et al. (2010).

More specifically, Section A and B of the structured interview examined students' current and past participation in sport and exercise, respectively, while the next two sections examined current participation in other home-based (e.g. watching TV, using the internet, listening to music) and out-of-home leisure activities (e.g. watching sport, going to bars and pubs, going to the cinema, socializing with friends) and lifestyle behaviours, especially the use of legal and illegal drugs. Section E examined students' past participation in various leisure activities and questions related to education (i.e. their current academic studies), employment status and finance (including wages and student loans) was the subject of Section F. The final section was entitled 'You, Your Family and Your Accommodation' and incorporated questions on aspects of students' biographies, including their educational background, whether their parents attended HE, and students' present residential status. By exploring these interrelated aspects of students' lives, the structured interviews endeavoured to generate largely quantitative, descriptive data on students' sporting and leisure behaviour by accounting 'for the actors' total situations and the broader

ways of life or lifestyles' (Roberts, 2006, p. 225) they recalled at the time of interview.

It is important to note, however, that the central object of the structured interviews and, indeed, follow-up semi-structured interviews (see below), was not to examine absolute levels of participation in sport and leisure, but to explore the relationships that exist between students' current participation and the development of their sport and leisure careers. As Birchwood et al. (2008, p. 291) noted in their quantitative study of sport participation in the three South Caucasus countries, such an approach was a vital prerequisite for arriving at their central conclusion: namely, that

all the major, recognised differences in adult rates of sports participation between sociodemographic groups are generated during childhood, via cultures that are transmitted through families, and that post-childhood experiences play a relatively minor direct part in generating these differences.

More recently, Haycock and Smith (2014a) also demonstrated the usefulness of examining (qualitatively) the relationships between adults' current sport and leisure participation and other social processes associated with the formation of sporting habituses during childhood, and how these helped generate unequal predispositions towards sport participation in adulthood. Being concerned centrally with the developmental relationships between, rather than absolute levels of, sport and leisure participation enabled Haycock and Smith (2014a) to provide further support for

Birchwood et al.'s (2008) hypothesis that while partly related to family socio-economic status, it was the cultural dimension of family environments that was the crucial source of young adults' predispositions to take part in sport, and which helped sustain unequal propensities to participate over the life course between childhood and young adulthood.

Recruiting students from two universities

Once institutional ethical approval had been obtained, the first empirical phase of the study involved recruiting a sample of third-year undergraduate students who attended two universities in England. Both institutions were among the group of post-92 universities in the UK, were each based in a city, and had at least two main campuses on which the students included in this study were taught. When the research was conducted – between March and July 2011 – the universities each had over 10,000 undergraduate students and had similar proportions of post-graduate students (equivalent to less than three times their undergraduate population) (Higher Education Statistics Agency [HESA], 2011a). Given its notably higher proportion of part-time students, University A had 20 per cent more registered undergraduates than University B and also had a higher proportion of full- and part-time academic staff (HESA, 2011b).

Both universities benefitted from modest sporting facilities (including a membership and fee-based gymnasium, astroturf pitches for various sports, a sports hall, and fitness halls for exercise classes), and students based there competed in a range of sporting competitions organized by British Universities and Colleges Sport (BUCS). The universities were located in areas where private commercial providers of sport

and leisure services competed for the attention of students who wished to engage in sport and exercise. Data published by the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) also indicated that, according to the 2010 Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD), University A was located in the top quintile of deprived areas in England, while University B was ranked in the bottom one-half of deprived areas according to IMD score (DCLG, 2011).

The researcher negotiated access to each university on the basis of personal contacts. In each university written approval to recruit students to the study was sought, first, by e-mail from the Head of Department of three subjects offered on a single and combined honours basis, and provided to students who studied full- and part-time. These subjects were: sport and exercise sciences, psychology (incorporating variants such as forensic psychology), and business studies (including business management). The three subjects were purposively selected for several reasons. These were to: (i) test the hypothesis that sports students may be more inclined to participate in sport and exercise than are other students following different subjects; (ii) permit comparison in both universities between subjects with a broadly physical science (sport and exercise sciences) and social science (psychology) base alongside a subject (business studies) deemed to be largely vocationally oriented (Brennen et al., 2009); and (iii) incorporate subjects which traditionally attract large and diverse proportions of students wishing to study full-time (all three subjects), as well as on a part-time basis (business studies and psychology). Data published by HESA (2011c) indicated that, for the academic year 2010/11 when the empirical research reported in this thesis was undertaken, 35,775 students were enrolled on full-time sports science courses (2,385 were part-time), almost twice as many students were following under-graduate

programmes in business studies on a full-time basis (67,835) and a further 26,485 were registered part-time, while 49,435 students were studying psychology full-time and 20,160 did so part-time (HESA, 2011c). The data also indicated that over one-half (56 per cent) of registered full-time undergraduate students and almost two-thirds (63 per cent) of part-time undergraduates were female (HESA, 2011d). Of those students on whom data for ethnic background exists, 79 per cent of full-time students (80 per cent female; 79 per cent male) and 86 per cent of part-time undergraduates (female and male) were self-defined as 'White' (HESA, 2011d).

Participants

In the present study, all 124 participants recruited to the study were aged 20-25-years-old and were thus considered representative of 'traditional' students; that is to say, those who in their third year of study had joined university immediately upon completing further education at a sixth-form college, or who had taken a short period of time away from their academic studies before enrolling at university. As elsewhere in England, the majority of students were studying full-time on single honours courses (UUK, 2014). For those students who were enrolled on combined honours courses, their main course of study was used to categorize their subject discipline.

In total, 46 males (37 per cent) and 78 females (63 per cent) were recruited to the study and completed the structured interview, a pattern which is consistent with the higher proportion of female undergraduates in HE institutions in England (UUK, 2014). Reflecting the residential status of students in England more broadly (UUK, 2014), exactly three-quarters (75%) of the sample were residential students (78 per cent males; 73 per cent females), just under two-fifths (39 per cent) studied sport (59

per cent males; 27 per cent females), approximately three-in-ten (29 per cent) were following business studies courses (30 per cent males; 28 per cent females), and one-third (32 per cent) were psychology students (11 per cent males; 45 per cent females). Although unsatisfactory in methodological terms, parental university attendance was used as a proxy measure for students' social class background (Birchwood et al., 2008; Lunn et al., 2013; Pot et al., 2014; Roberts, 2011), and on this basis those participants (43 per cent) who reported that one or more of their parents had themselves attended university were defined as middle-class (39 per cent males; 45 per cent). Students who said neither of their parents had previously attended university (57 per cent) were defined as working-class (61 per cent males; 55 per cent females). Higher proportions of students studying sport (41 per cent) and psychology (35 per cent) than business studies (24 per cent) were defined as working-class, while fewer students following psychology courses (28 per cent) were defined as middle-class compared to those enrolled on sport and business studies programmes (both 36 per cent).

A slightly higher proportion of students in the sample attended University B (53 per cent) where six-in-ten were residential students (60 per cent) compared to two-fifths of those attending University A (40 per cent). The opposite pattern was observed for commuting students, twice as many of whom attended University A (68 per cent) than University B (32 per cent). Working-class students were more likely to be represented in both University A (55 per cent) and University B (59 per cent) and dominate both residential (56 per cent) and commuting (61 per cent) samples of students. In terms of subject studied, higher proportions of students following sport (52 per cent) and

business studies (61 per cent) courses attended University B, while more psychology students (53 per cent) were being educated at University A at the time of interview.

Procedure: structured interviews

As noted earlier, the first empirical phase of the study involved the completion of a structured interview designed to generate detailed biographical data on students' participation in various sport and leisure activities, experience of life-transitions, and their involvement in education and employment. Once written permission had been granted by the relevant Head of Department to recruit participants from the selected subjects of study, the researcher delivered a short 10-minute PowerPoint presentation (Appendix A) to students at the beginning or end of a lead lecture with the prior agreement of the tutor involved. The presentation outlined to students what the study was about, what their participation would entail, and the benefits of engaging in the study. In light of the difficulties encountered when trying to arrange suitable lecture times in which to deliver the presentation, the researcher was also constrained, on occasions, to recruit students from both universities – with the permission of the above parties – immediately after students had submitted coursework assessments to departmental receptions. Both methods proved effective in recruiting students once the nature and purpose of the study, and the procedures involved, had been explained to them.

Those students who expressed an interest in participating in Phase One of the study – the structured interview – completed a biography sheet which sought the following information: name, age, sex, title of degree course, residential status (commuting or residential), and contact details to enable the researcher to arrange a convenient time

and location in which to conduct the interview at a later date. On the basis of the completed biography sheets received, students aged 20-25-years-old were contacted by telephone or e-mail (depending on the details students left on the biography sheet) to participate in the structured interview. A maximum of three follow-up attempts were made to recruit students to the study.

The structured interviews took between 40 and 60 minutes to complete and were undertaken during March and April 2011. Each interview took place in a pre-arranged quiet teaching or meeting room on a university campus, and was completed with the participants' written and oral consent before the interview commenced. Consistent with published recommendations of best practice (e.g. Bryman, 2012), the rationale for the research in which each interviewee was being asked to participate was provided by the researcher in both a standardized verbal and written form. To maximize the degree to which rapport could be achieved with the interviewee, the researcher emphasized at the outset the relevance of the interview to understanding students' lives as they themselves saw them, rather than from the stereotypical perspectives of student life that others may seek to impose on them. Although careful not to detract substantially from the standardized questions being asked, the researcher also sought to maintain rapport with the participants at appropriate points throughout the interview, often at the end of each section or when the interviewee required further clarification on the topics being discussed. This attempt to enthuse students about the structured interview, and to develop appropriate rapport with them during the course of interviewing, was in practice a 'deliberate balancing act' (Bryman, 2012: 218). It involved, on the one hand, the researcher emphasizing in a relaxed and informal manner the non-judgemental ways in which responses were

being sought from the participant and, on the other, asking questions as they were written, and without varying the wording of questions, whilst also recording accurately the responses given (Bryman, 2012).

Analysis of structured interview data

Once completed, the structured interviews were scanned into a personal computer using Formic software and each interviewee was assigned a unique personal identification number ranging from 1-124. The quantitative data generated by the interview were then uploaded to the IBM Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (version 18.0) where one-quarter of all values identified by the Formic scanner were subsequently hand-checked by the researcher (row-by-row) against the values entered on the original interview schedule to verify the accuracy of the data. Once this process of data verification had been completed, the data were then computed to produce a range of descriptive statistics that addressed the relevant research questions. Expressed in the form of frequency counts, the data were analysed via cross-tabulation of specific dependent variables (e.g. sports and leisure activities undertaken) by, in most cases, four independent variables: sex, subject of study, social class, and residential status. It is important to note that although, in some cases, categorizing the sample according to one of these four variables (e.g. subject of study) skewed the sample according to other potentially confounding social variables (e.g. sex), where appropriate this skewing was accounted for as part of the data analysis. The quantitative findings reported in subsequent chapters therefore account for this and typically reported on associations between the variables discussed. In addition, a number of other data manipulations were performed and represented using cross-tabulations, most notably those undertaken to permit the analysis of students' long-

term participation in sport and leisure (e.g. when calculating the numbers of activities undertaken in each year prior to interview). Since these data were not normally distributed, median values were used as a basis for constructing students' sporting careers that are presented in Chapter 4. Other analyses of statistical significance between the variables examined were not undertaken because, following Bryman (2012), the participants were not randomly assigned to the sample of interviewees and because of the comparatively small sample size involved. This was not considered problematic, however, since the purpose of the interview (as noted earlier) was to examine the relationships between the relevant variables (e.g. sport participation and sex) rather than establishing the precise significance of absolute rates of participation in sport and leisure.

Although the relationships between key variables were identified during the course of statistical analysis, causality can only ever be attributed, nor observed (Roberts, 2012). This is because quantitative research is frequently regarded as being 'good at measuring the relationships between whatever is measured, but less effective at uncovering the processes that are responsible for the relationships' (Roberts, 2012, p. 125). These relationships require explanation and in this respect semi-structured interviews were employed in Phase Two of the study to help explain in greater detail students' sport and leisure careers, and to explore the relationships between their earlier and current participation in sport and leisure.

Before outlining why semi-structured interviews were also used in the study however, it is important to note that structured interviews generate 'what may appear to be hard

facts, resembling Durkheim's social facts which have been plucked from the real world through systematic observation, asking questions and examining objects' (Roberts, 2012, p. 124). In practice, though, sociologists recognize that 'the investigator always and necessarily plays a role in constructing these facts; they are made rather than simply discovered and unearthed' (Roberts, 2012, p. 124). Statistical data of the kind produced by the structured interviews used in this study were thus products of social activity, of the complex interrelationships comprised by students with many other people, some of whom they know, others of whom they do not know directly, but who nevertheless constrain the ways in which they think and act. Accordingly, while they cannot in themselves provide an explanation of students' sport and leisure careers, the data generated by the structured interviews were nevertheless important. They identified common patterns of behaviour described by students and pointed to 'specific variations in the way people (i.e. students) are caught up in a network of relations' (Elias, 1978, p. 98-9) that generate intended and unintended consequences for their participation in sport and leisure, the significance of which were explored further in the second empirical phase of the study.

Research phase two: semi-structured interviews

Like many other sociologists who 'treat different research methods as complementary' (Roberts, 2012, p. 119), the researcher in the present study regarded semi-structured interviews as one particularly useful method which encouraged students to provide more detailed explanations of their current and past participation in sport and leisure. Thus, in order to provide a fuller, more adequate, analysis of students' sport and leisure participation qualitative semi-structured interviews were

also undertaken with a sub-sample of students whose sporting and leisure careers had been constructed from the quantitative responses given in the structured interviews. As Heath et al. (2009, p. 79) have noted, the qualitative interview is 'probably the most widely used research method in youth research' and is 'generally regarded as a young person-friendly strategy, providing opportunities for young people to talk about their lives and on their own terms'. This approach to interviewing, it is argued, was particularly important because the 'meanings of young people's attitudes and actions are all too often either assumed or based on adult interpretations' (Heath et al., 2009, p. 79), and are liable to reflect distorted representations of the reality of students' lived experiences and behaviours.

Qualitative semi-structured interviews were additionally selected on the premise that they would assist the researcher in providing university students with an opportunity to 'tell their stories on their own terms and in their own words' (Heath et al., 2009, p. 80) through the generation of largely qualitative data on students' claimed experiences, and the accounts they gave of their lives, routines and sport and leisure careers. In particular, during the course of interviewing students were encouraged to offer their views and experiences of engaging in sport and other leisure activities throughout the course of their lives thus far, and asked to identify the links between their 'past experiences, states of mind and present actions' (Roberts, 2012, p. 130). This involved, amongst other things, encouraging students to reflect upon: their dynamic sport and leisure careers; the impact attending university had on their participation in sport; their engagement in so-called risky leisure behaviours such as the consumption of legal and illegal drugs; and the inherently transitional youth life stage which they were negotiating. The interviews also provided them with an

opportunity to discuss the ways in which they feel their broader experiences (e.g. attending university, social class background, key life-events) have shaped their lives, directly and indirectly, and help contextualize the individual responses they gave in the structured interview about their emergent sport and leisure careers.

Participants

At the end of the structured interviews, all participants were given the opportunity to indicate their willingness to be interviewed in the second phase of the research. With the exception of seven students (3 psychology, 4 business), the participants who engaged in Phase One of the study indicated that, if selected, they were prepared to participate in the semi-structured interviews. These participants were subsequently clustered into groups based on their subject of study, university attended, sport participation, sex and social class to maximize the degree to which the final sample of interviewees were as representative as possible of the broader population of students who engaged in the first phase of the research. Thirty-six participants (18 from each university) were then purposively selected to participate in the semi-structured interviews, with the intention of recruiting six students to each of the three subjects of study in both universities. Where possible, an equal number of males and females were recruited to each subject of study but because psychology was dominated by females in both universities (which is reflected elsewhere [UUK, 2014]), higher proportions of young women were represented in the sample of semi-structured interviewees.

In total, 13 males and 23 females who were among the sample of 124 students who participated in Phase One of the study also completed semi-structured interviews. Of

the male interviewees, it can be seen from Table 3.1 that seven participants attended University A, nine were residential students, and the majority studied sport (n=6) or business (n=6). Similar proportions of males were defined as working-class (n=7) or middle-class (n=6), and their current sport participation ranged from 5 or more days per week to less than monthly. Table 3.2 also indicates that of the females who were interviewed, 12 attended University B, just under one-half studied psychology (n=11) and almost twice as many females were residential students (n=16) and had no parents who previously attended university (n=15). Current weekly sport participation among female interviewees ranged from 5 or more days per week to no participation in the year prior to being interviewed.

Procedure

In the light of constraints associated with institutional timetabling, curriculum and assessment structure, semi-structured interviews began at the end of April 2011 in University A and from mid-May 2011 in University B. Each interview lasted for between 30 and 120 minutes, took place in a quiet teaching or meeting room on a university campus, and was digitally recorded with the interviewees' written and oral consent. Having explained the nature and purposes of the research in a covering letter and verbally before interviews were conducted, the interviews began with a brief, standardized explanation of the nature of the interview and how it related to the structured interview previously completed by the participants. To help allay any fears the participants may have had regarding the use of data, they were given a verbal guarantee of anonymity that they would not be identified in any published research. To further reassure participants of the anonymity of their responses, they were each

asked whether they wished to receive a copy of the digital recording and the transcript to modify should they wish to do so. None of them requested this.

During the course of the interviews, students were asked to discuss, in developmental terms, the construction of their sport and leisure careers over the life course thus far as well as their present-day participation. This approach to interviewing was permitted by the use of an individualized and flexible interview guide (Appendix B) which was constructed around the key orienting themes of the study, as well as key features of the responses interviewees gave to the researcher in Phase One of the study. Firstly, the interviews involved asking them about their childhood experiences of sport and leisure, especially those developed in the context of family-based leisure, and how these formative experiences (established during the primary school years, that is, aged 5-11-years-old) provided the foundations upon which their subsequent biographies and careers were based. Secondly, students were asked to reflect upon the ways in which their participation in sport developed in the context of their unfolding lives during the secondary school years (11-16-years-old) in which their social relationships, particularly with friends, became increasingly significant. Thirdly, students were asked about how their attendance at sixth-form college impacted on their engagement in sport and leisure, and how this was related to their emerging identities and priorities as young people.

Table 3.1 Biographical details of male interviewees

Interviewee name	Current participation	Subject of study	Social Class	Residential Status	University attended
Paul	3-4 days	Sport	1 parent	Commuting	University A
Jon	2 days	Sport	2 parents	Residential	University A
Leon	3-4 days	Sport	No parents	Commuting	University A
Barry	5 or more days	Sport	1 parent	Residential	University B
Justin	3-4 days	Sport	No parents	Residential	University B
Mike	5 or more days	Sport	No parents	Residential	University B
Chris	5 or more days	Business	1 parent	Commuting	University A
Aaron	2 days	Business	2 parents	Residential	University A
Matt	Less than monthly	Business	No parents	Commuting	University A
Jack	2-3 times a month	Business	1 parent	Residential	University B
Gaz	3-4 days	Business	No parents	Residential	University B
Colin	1 day	Business	No parents	Residential	University B
Kai	2 days	Psychology	No parents	Residential	University A

Table 3.2 Biographical details of female interviewees

Interviewee Name	Current Participation	Subject of study	Social class	Residential status	University attended
Sue	3-4 days	Sport	No parents	Commuting	University A
Leonie	3-4 days	Sport	No parents	Commuting	University A
Sally	3-4 days	Sport	No parents	Residential	University A
Claire	3-4 days	Sport	No parents	Residential	University B
Davina	Less than monthly	Sport	2 parents	Residential	University B
Lisa	3-4 days	Sport	No parents	Residential	University B
Ann	3-4 days	Psychology	1 parent	Residential	University A
Sarah	2 days	Psychology	No parents	Commuting	University A
Susan	No participation	Psychology	No parents	Residential	University A
Pam	2-3 times a month	Psychology	No parents	Commuting	University A
Emma	1 day	Psychology	2 parents	Residential	University A
Rosie	2-3 times a month	Psychology	No parents	Residential	University B
Rhianna	5 or more days	Psychology	No parents	Residential	University B
Natalie	Less than monthly	Psychology	No parents	Residential	University B
Jane	3-4 days	Psychology	2 parents	Residential	University B
Emily	2 days	Psychology	No parents	Residential	University B
Catrina	2 days	Psychology	No parents	Residential	University B
Holly	No participation	Business	2 parents	Residential	University A
Jackie	5 or more days	Business	1 parent	Commuting	University A
Karen	2 days	Business	No parents	Commuting	University A
Hannah	No participation	Business	No parents	Residential	University B
Cathy	2 days	Business	2 parents	Residential	University B
Serena	1 day	Business	2 parents	Commuting	University B

The coverage of these themes not only encouraged students to discuss the topics of interest to the researcher, but also enabled them to draw attention to other issues which were equally relevant to the topic being explored, even if the connections between these were ‘not always straightforwardly transparent to the researcher’ or which ‘simply had not occurred to the researcher’ (Heath et al., 2009, p. 81). One notable benefit of adopting a flexible and varied approach towards the process of semi-structured interviews was the extent to which students’ perceptions and experiences of using university gymnasiums emerged as especially gendered. As Chapter 4 makes clear, university gyms were invariably perceived by females as largely male-dominated, as contexts in which they felt unable to exercise in a manner consistent with their motivations and preferences, and as sites in which they were routinely subject to the uncomfortable gaze of many men. Since this was not a subject to which any space on the original interview guide had been allocated, the semi-structured format provided necessary ‘flexibility to enable the researcher to pursue these unanticipated themes and connections in detail’ (Heath et al., 2009, p. 81) with female interviewees and, indeed, some male participants for whom university gyms were not necessarily conducive to promoting their participation in sport.

Thematic analysis of semi-structured interview data

Once completed, all of the interviews were transcribed verbatim and the largely qualitative data they generated on students’ sport and leisure careers were subjected to thematic analysis, which is one of the most commonly used forms of analysing interview data (Bryman, 2012; Roulston, 2010). As Roulston (2010, p. 150-51; emphases in the original) has noted, this approach entailed the following interrelated processes:

data reduction, through applying codes to the data ... or elimination of repetitive or irrelevant data ... in order to define conceptual categories; *categorization of data*, through sorting and classification of the codes or data into thematic groupings or clusters, and ... *reorganization of the data into thematic representations* of findings through a series of assertions and interpretations.

At the outset, each interview transcript was read to identify, by hand, ‘the facts and information they contain’ (Denscombe, 2010, p. 279) as a basis for “‘reading between the lines” to see what lies beneath the surface’ (Denscombe, 2010, p. 279) of the participants’ responses. The first stage of this process involved identifying codes ‘derived directly from words and phrases uttered by the participant (known as ‘in-vivo’ codes), as well as codes relating to the research questions posed’ (Roulston, 2010, p. 151) and existing literature on students’ sport and leisure careers (known as ‘analytic’ codes). The ‘in-vivo’ codes identifiable in students’ responses included ‘sporty people’, ‘parents and family’, ‘uncomfortable’, ‘changing room and showers’, and ‘clicky’, while the ‘analytic’ codes incorporated ‘networks of relationships’, ‘masculinity’, and ‘careers and predispositions’. In the second stage, an ‘iterative and recursive process’ (Roulston, 2010, p. 153) of cross-checking the in-vivo and analytic codes made on earlier transcriptions against the codes assigned to later ones was undertaken. This resulted in the original codes being ‘adjusted, collapsed, and revised’ (Roulston, 2010, p. 153) as necessary into categories of data (e.g. ‘body image’, ‘negative views and experiences of team sport’, ‘quality of sporting facilities’). This categorization of data – the third stage of data analysis – was performed, firstly, for each individual interview transcript, and then across all of the interviews, to ensure that the data were not forced into ‘pre-formulated coding schemes’ (Roulston, 2010, p. 152). It also ensured that the final thematic representations of students’ views and experiences of their

sporting and leisure careers were as accurate as possible. The main themes that were indicative of the differential views and experiences students recalled during the semi-structured interviews were: (i) experiences of university sport facilities and sport clubs; (ii) sporting predispositions acquired through childhood experiences and family socialization into sport; and (iii) normalization of leisure behaviours.

Limitations of the research methods

Before examining the key features of students' sport and leisure careers in the remaining chapters of this thesis, it is important to remain mindful of the several well-documented difficulties of an over-reliance on self-report measures such as interviews (Bryman, 2012; Roulston, 2010). These include the difficulty with which participants such as students can be relied upon to recall accurately their early life experiences, particularly when the recall period is long, the activity being discussed is not salient, and the behaviours under discussion are not habitual (Lunn, 2010). It is also well-known that research participants have a tendency to over-report lifestyle behaviours like levels and frequency of sport participation, and to underestimate time spent on other leisure activities (e.g. use of legal and illegal drugs) undertaken during the course of their unfolding lives (Haycock & Smith, 2014b; Roberts, 2014; Roberts & Brodie, 1992). This was, however, an unavoidable dimension of this study which was centrally concerned with understanding the construction of students' sport and leisure careers that tend 'to extend over years and to involve salient events' (Lunn, 2010, p. 712), including those associated with behaviours liable to be under- or over-estimated. Students' recollections of past participation in sport and other leisure activities may indeed have involved a margin of error, but despite the difficulties involved the use of both interview methods was employed here to help enhance understanding of the relationships that exist

between students' sport and leisure careers in a manner not possible by other means (Birchwood et al., 2008).

Chapter Four

University Students' Sport Careers

Introduction

To help answer the key research questions this chapter analyses the development of students' sport careers until the 12-month period prior to completing the structured interviews as part of Phase One of the study. In doing so, the chapter draws on quantitative and qualitative data to examine: (i) the relationships between students' social profiles and the development of their sport careers; (ii) the development of students' sport careers over the life course thus far and the importance of experiences during childhood and youth; and (iii) the significance of these early experiences for students' current sport participation.

Students' sport careers: the significance of sex and subject of study

As noted in Chapter 3, the four key social demographic variables that were used to analyse students' involvement in sport and leisure and thus form the basis of the key quantitative findings presented in this and the next three chapters were: sex, residential status, social class and subject of study. Before identifying the key socially structured differences in the trajectories of students' sport careers, it is worth emphasizing the significance of these differences by briefly discussing the differences in students' sport careers according to their current level of participation – which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 5. In this regard, as shown in Figure 4.1, there were several identifiable trends in the trajectories of students' sport careers when analysed according to the frequency of their present-day participation. Until age 8, the participation of all students, regardless of the frequency of their

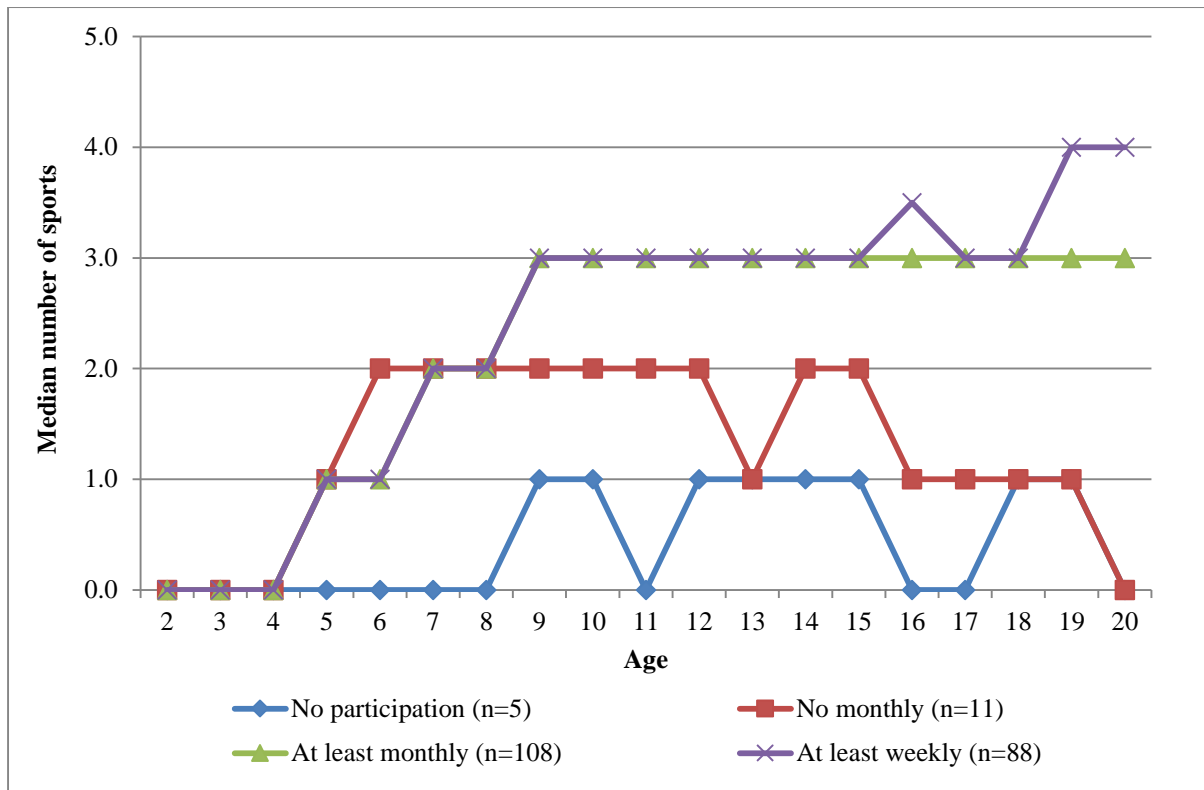


Figure 4.1 Life course sport participation by current frequency of participation

present-day participation, clustered around two sports, with the notable exception of those who had not been not active in the last 12 months who did no sports in their leisure time until age 9. From age 9 onwards, greater disparities in the number of sports undertaken were observed with clear differences between the proportion of students currently participating at least monthly or weekly, and those currently reporting no monthly participation or no participation in the last 12 months. More specifically, students who currently participated in sport at least monthly had regularly engaged in three or more sports from 9 to 20-years-old, compared to those who had participated less than monthly or not at all in the last 12 months and whose participation fluctuated between no sports and two sports over the same period. These differences in participation between the four groups generally widened from the end of compulsory schooling (age 16) and, therefore, this inherently transitional stage of the life course appeared to impact more notably on the participation of students who had participated

in a narrower range of sports during the primary and secondary school years. Present-day participants who engaged in three or more sports throughout the secondary school years appeared more likely to survive the constraints on participation as their lives began to unfreeze at age 16 (Roberts, 1996, 2006). Therefore, it is evident from these data that differences in students' present-day participation clearly developed far earlier in the life course and were inextricably linked to their broader sport careers. Given the significance of the development of students' sport careers for understanding their present-day participation, how, if at all, were their sport careers socially structured?

It was evident that the two most important social discriminators of students' sport careers were sex and subject of study. Nevertheless, as shown by Figure 4.2, regardless of sex and subject of study, it was clear that until age 12 all students' sport careers were broadly similar, with all groups reporting at least monthly participation in three sports. From age 13, however, the participation of female students studying either business or psychology dropped and remained at two sports, whilst the participation of males studying these subjects plateaued at three sports until age 16 before also narrowing to two sports from age 17. Similarly, females studying sport also reported participating in fewer sports regularly between age 13 and 15 but broadened and maintained their participation in three sports again from age 16 to 20. The clearest differences in students' sport careers were observed in relation to male students studying sport. This group reported a doubling in the median number of sports in which they participated (from three to six sports) between 13- and 16-years-old, before stabilizing to five sports from age 17 to 20. In sum, it was evident that the two most consistent predictors of sport careers that encompassed regular participation in a range of sports were sex (male) and subject of study (sport). To help explain these quantitative differences and explore more adequately the intricacies of the

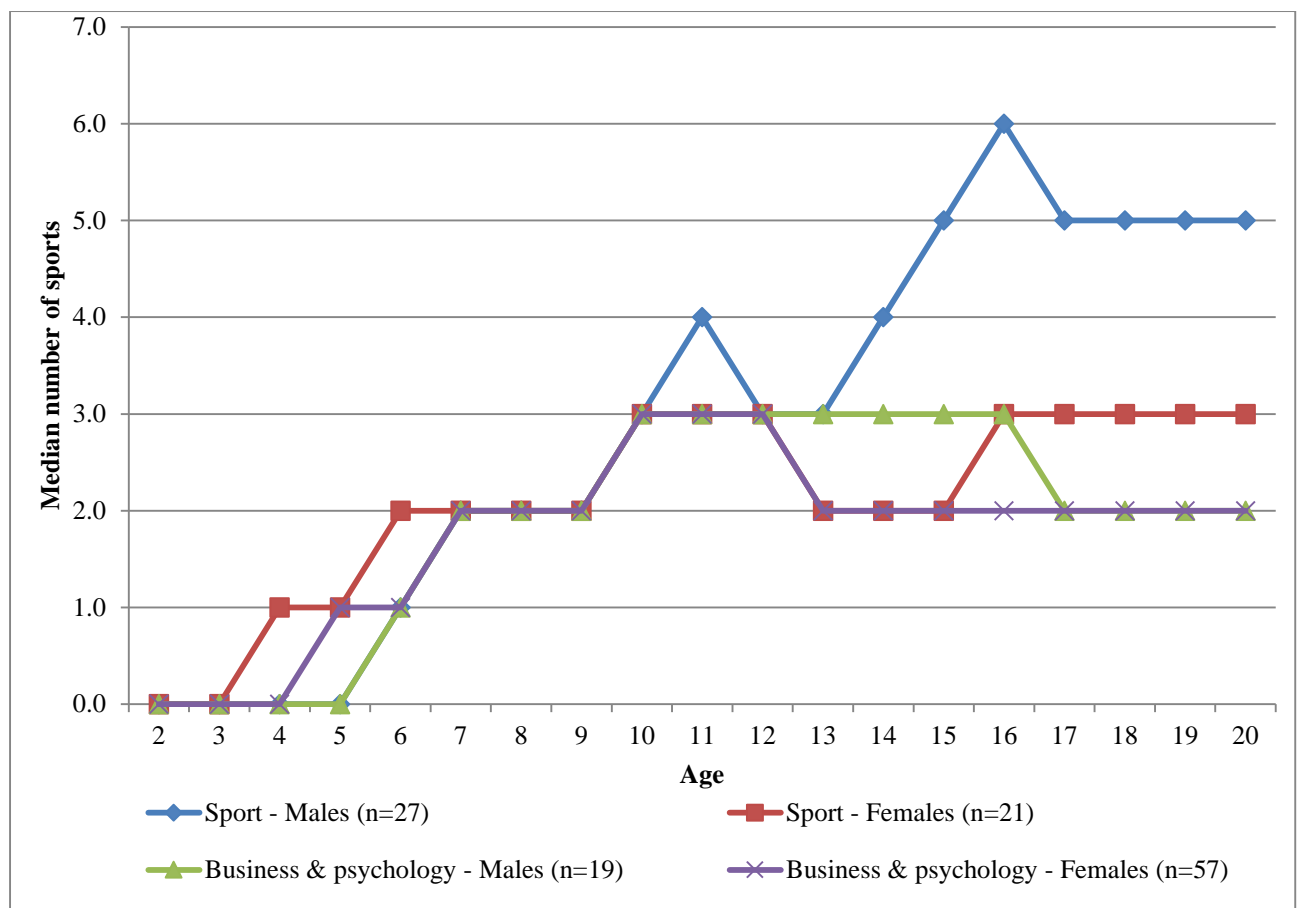


Figure 4.2 Life course sport participation by subject of study and sex

changes and developments in students' sport careers as they unfolded over the life course, the next section will draw on the qualitative semi-structured interview data of students' differential experiences of sport during childhood and youth.

Childhood experiences and family socialization into sport

Parents and the gendered role of mothers and fathers

When examining students' childhood experiences and family socialization into sport, it was clear that different kinds of students, from different family backgrounds, were to varying degrees socialized into sport from a young age by different family members. Fathers, in particular, appeared crucial to students' childhood sport socialization (Kay, 2009a; Harrington, 2009, 2013; Shaw & Dawson, 2001). For many male students fathers played a

particularly important role in their early involvement in stereotypically male activities such as football. In this regard, one male sport student recalled how his father, having enjoyed football himself when younger, also tried to broaden his sport participation as a child by trying to encourage him to participate in a range of sports:

Mike: From a young age my dad was a keen footballer ... he sort of like pushed me towards football, but then he tried to get me involved in other activities, but I didn't really want to do that because I really enjoyed football ... When my dad was younger he used to do all sorts of sports ... He wanted me to do the same sports as he did, like he wanted me to join taekwondo and karate, but I didn't really want to do that and he accepted that, and then, because he knew I was a good footballer ... he just wanted me to play for a club.

Similarly, another male – who studied business at University A – described the central importance of his father to his childhood participation in football and other activities thus:

Aaron: My dad was probably the reason I got involved to begin with ... the football team that he coached was the one I was in ... Before I even started playing football – because my dad was interested in it – I just naturally got involved and used to go and watch and then I started playing and got involved in the team and that's basically how I got involved with it. And it sort (of) just branched out. Because he did other sports I just tried them ... like a golfing lesson and things like that, going to play tennis and things.

The centrality of fathers in introducing and encouraging sport participation among their offspring was not limited to their sons however, for many female students also noted the importance of their fathers to their early childhood sport socialization (Haycock & Smith, 2014a; Kay, 2009a; Quarmby & Dagkas, 2010; Thompson, 1999). In some cases, females described how their fathers' influence often meant that their early sport participation became focused around more commonly stereotypically male activities like football. Despite the wishes of her mother, one female sport student also described how her early participation in football provided her father with an opportunity to develop closeness (Kay, 2009a) between them:

Lisa: My mum was always against me playing football ... My parents are split up, so football for me was something that I could do with my dad ... My mum always wanted me to be the more girly girly, playing ballet that kind of thing, whereas I was against that from like a really young age (laughs). So I was always wanting to play football and stuff because that was always what my dad was into ... He was always the one that would take me to the matches and support me stuff and buy me the ticket and whatever.

Notwithstanding the tendency for some fathers to encourage their daughters to participate in stereotypical male activities in which they personally already had an interest, fathers also remained important to their daughters' participation in more gender neutral (e.g. tennis) and stereotypically feminine activities (e.g. gymnastics). For example, Davina, a sport student at University B, described how:

They [parents] would never have made me do it if I didn't want to ... you get some parents that help at gym and they're like they're awful to their own children and you

wouldn't ever put them coaching their own children, but I wouldn't say me and my dad were ever like that really, and my sister did gymnastics as well and so it was quite like a family thing I suppose. But my mum, she never really got involved. She hated it because we were always out of the house.

In addition to the role played by her father during her childhood sport socialization, Rosie, a psychology student at University B, also explained how the limited influence of her mother on her early engagement in sport was focused around female appropriate sports like ballet:

I think my dad influenced me more than my mum. My mum was never really into fitness and stuff like that but my dad always used to drag me along to stuff that he did so that I'd be interested in it ... The football when I was younger he got me involved in that because the guy who did the team is like a friend of his and it was like he just dragged me along one day to go and see it because I was never really interested in football and then they let me play with them and I just kind of got into it but my mum influenced me more for the ballet.

The rather gendered nature of mothers' involvement in the participants' early sport socialization was a broader theme of the interviews held with other females who suggested their mothers played a more direct role in their childhood sporting experiences (Harrington, 2013; Quarmby & Dagkas, 2010; Shaw & Dawson, 2001). One female psychology student at University B described her mother's more active (yet often gendered) role in her participation in dance and ballet, alongside her father's encouragement of her brother's involvement in football, in the following way:

Emily: I started at dance school when I was four, my mum and dad put me in it and I just loved it ... dance classes like Pilates ... I just really enjoyed it and so like as I got older I just went to more and more classes so I didn't really have time to try much other things ... My mum just signed me up for the ballet classes to start off with 'cos I was really shy so she wanted me to go and meet more people ... Mum was my dance and dad was my brother doing football and stuff.

Another female psychology student from University B described the central role her mother played in her participation in sports such as swimming and juxtaposed this with what she described as the 'laid-back attitude' of her father:

Natalie: I think my mum was probably the reason I got into swimming so young because she has always encouraged me into swimming and she always took me swimming and to my swimming lessons ... She never pushed me to do anything I didn't want to outside of school. I myself had to opt for the karate, I chose to do karate when I was in secondary school and ... my dad has kind of got this laid-back attitude.

It was evident that for some students, particularly those not studying sport, either their mother or father were more or less central to their sport participation. For other students, often those studying sport, who generally participated in a wider range of sports regularly and who were also more likely to report higher rates of present-day sport participation, it was clear that both parents played important roles in their childhood sport socialization (Haycock & Smith, 2014a; Kay, 2004, 2009a). For some of these students, however, it was clear that the roles played by their mothers and fathers were rather different, with mothers often performing more domestic and feminine duties whilst fathers sought to motivate and improve

performance. One male sport student at University A, who played semi-professional football, for example, described the roles played by his parents when he said:

Paul: My parents always backed me. As soon as I said I want to have a go at it they took me everywhere, they let me go training, they helped fund me. And it helps when you have got your friends saying I think you are quite good at this ... My dad played football but he only played like 5-a-side ... he helped 'cos once I said I wanted to play he did have a passion for me to improve, especially as a goal keeper, so he would always try and drill stuff in. My mum was able to take me everywhere; she still does bless her ... My dad is going 'You're better doing this, you're better doing that, train like that'. He tried instilling to me that 'practice makes perfect' so I was out on the street doing kick-ups and all that stuff from the age of about 10 and I was always out on the road and I think they have helped once I said I wanted to do it, they said go on, go training and just try your best to do it and tried to push me on. My parents ... have both helped out. I mean my dad always concentrates on the football side. They haven't been over the top, they haven't said 'You have got to do this, you have got to do that'. They have given me some freedom towards it but would say ... 'Just keep working hard you will get what you deserve' ... I think that is pretty much it: they've inspired me.

Similarly, another male sport student at University A who had previously been part of a professional football academy when young and currently played at semi-professional level, described how much both his parents enjoyed sport and watching him play. In particular, he commented upon the central role played by his dad in maintaining his participation in football as follows:

Leon: Say I have got a little knock and I personally don't want to play in case I make it worse or something, my mum and dad will be like 'Oh you're alright just strap it up' ... and I will end up playing and that's how it is ... If I stopped playing football now they probably wouldn't speak to me kind of thing, that's how bad they enjoy it ... My dad ... did everything for me like footballing wise, like when I first signed for [name] when I was 15 ... we used to go [name of city] on a Tuesday and Thursday night every week for three years just for training for like an hour and a half ... He used be up at half 5 for work ... (to) take me there, and not get back 'til 10 and then go bed and just do that like every night ... He put himself out for me so I feel ... it's only fair that I do play football and try my best to repay him.

Notwithstanding the rather gendered ways in which mothers and fathers engaged in the childhood sports socialization of their children, the comments of the participants in this study pointed towards the well established influence of the family on developing propensities for participating in sport (Kay, 2004; Kay & Spaaij, 2012), and to childhood as the key life-stage in which the foundations for unequal sporting dispositions are laid (Quarmby & Dagkas, 2010, 2013). In particular, during the course of primary socialization it was clear that the family (especially parents) played a crucial role in facilitating among children an ability to develop the kinds of skills, dispositions, and knowledge needed to play, and be competent at, sport. This was especially true for those students who reported having the support of two (often formerly sports-active) parents (Davison et al., 2003; Haycock & Smith, 2014a; Pot et al., 2014; Scheerder et al., 2005; Vandermeerschen et al., 2014) who endeavoured to pass on their love for sport through what Lareau (2011) has called a process of 'concerted cultivation' during their childhood leisure time. In this regard, the middle-class parents of students (sports students, especially males) who were the most sports-active over the life course appeared to

regard leisure as an important site for their socialization into sport, often by purposively transmitting significant stocks of capitals (e.g. cultural, sporting, physical, economic, and symbolic) (Evans & Bairner, 2012; Evans & Davies, 2010) in and through the emerging figurations or networks of which they were a part. In particular, the acquisition of greater stocks of sporting capital (e.g. the predispositions, skills, knowledge, literacy needed for sport participation) (Pot et al., 2014; Rowe, 2014) during childhood provided the foundations on which the most active university students' subsequent participation was based (Bourdieu, 1978; Pot et al., 2014; Vandermeerschen et al., 2014).

The parental practices recalled by students, which were partly related to social class but also gendered, provided the foundation for the development of students' individual and group sporting habituses during the more impressionable phase of childhood (Dunning, 2002; Dunning & Hughes, 2013; Elias, 2001; van Krieken, 1998). Childhood represented for students a crucial time during the course of which their propensity towards, or away from, sport participation developed in the context of their present-day figurations and those to which they belonged in previous generations. It was within these contexts that sports students' participation, in particular, became a more or less central element of their habituses through the experiences they shared with others (especially their parents) who had themselves been habituated through similar experiences. The childhood construction of sporting habits and predispositions thus became deeply embedded and internalized in sports students' emerging personality structures (Green, 2010, 2014; Haycock & Smith, 2014a) as their networks of interdependence were becoming more or less complex, and more or less compelling, during the course of growing up (Dunning & Hughes, 2013; Elias, 2001; van Krieken, 1998). The most active students had become, in effect, socialized into emerging figurations where sport participation was normalized, expected, and valued as an end in itself

so much of their childhood involvement in leisure was spent pursuing parental priorities for sport (Jakobsson et al., 2012; Kay, 2004; Pot et al., 2014; Stuij, 2013), and being exposed to family contexts that proved particularly efficacious for the inter-generational transmission of sporting dispositions (Birchwood et al., 2008; Bourdieu, 1978; Vandermeersch et al., 2014).

These family contexts, it should be added, were more conducive to the childhood development of wide sporting repertoires (Roberts & Brodie, 1992) by the most active students over the life course. Indeed, one of the distinguishing features of these students' early sports socialization and continued participation, which differentiated them from other students, was the median number of different sports that they had played regularly, at least monthly, and in which they became proficient during childhood (Roberts, 2014; Roberts & Brodie, 1992). Significantly, male sports students reported a doubling in the median number of sports in which they participated (from three to six sports) between 13- and 16-years-old, a period when the participatory portfolios of all other students were becoming characterized by engagement in fewer sports than formerly. For male sports students in particular, then, their sport careers appeared less vulnerable to disruption over the life course (Roberts & Brodie, 1992) because of their childhood experiences of a variety of sports, which were to a large extent positive and cultivated intensely through processes of primary socialization which strengthened their perceptions of competence and literacy in a range of sports. As their figurations continued to expand and incorporate a higher number and diverse range of friends, they also become locked into peer-oriented groups in which sport participation was an expected and normalized feature of their experiences of secondary socialization which strengthened their unfolding sporting habituses.

The growing importance of friends

In addition to the importance of family members, during childhood friends became increasingly significant for the formation of sporting predispositions and habituses, especially among the more frequent participants, during periods of secondary socialization (Green, 2010; Lareau, 2011). For one highly active male sport student (University B) friends became progressively important to his sport participation with age and added to the encouragement he received from parents. Justin, who grew up living with his mother and her partner described the importance of her encouragement, and that of other family and friends, to his participation in rugby and golf thus:

Justin: All my friends play sport really, like nearly every single one of them does play a sport ... my family ... (are) quite sporty and stuff ... the place I live is quite a like rural area, so there's not really much else to do except for play sport really ... It's quite a small area so you pretty much tend to either get into football or rugby in my area ... I got into rugby and then it's quite a traditional well known rugby town ... My mum always encouraged me to play, but she obviously never really sort of pushed me to play rugby ... I go to [the golf] course and play with my aunty and uncle, and then my girlfriend's dad plays as well now, so that's another person to play with. But ... my mum's husband was an influence for me to play golf and as soon as I started playing and got it, I enjoyed it, I didn't need to be influenced ... I wanted to play all the time and then my aunty and uncle gave me a chance to play with someone.

In a not dissimilar way, a male business student at University B also drew particular attention to the influence of his mother, father and friends on his participation since childhood. He said:

Gaz: Rugby is totally down to friends and sort of where I live because [name of town] is completely rugby, but it was mainly down to friends. Football is down to family, I think power lifting is down to me, golf is down to my dad. I have never been discouraged from playing a sport by my family, but also when you are little you want to do what your dad does don't you so I played football just to sort of try and impress him. And then when you start getting friends you play a sport to impress them. I think it changes completely: as you grow up you start off trying to impress your family. So when I was little I did football, karate, and tap dancing, so football and karate were to impress my dad and my mum sort of pushed me into dancing, so that was sort of to try and impress her but then when you start getting mates you want to impress them so you sort of do whatever sport they do to try and compete with them.

Other students emphasized the importance of friends and siblings to their developing engagement in sport, as in the case of one female psychology student at University B, who commented that her friends were particularly important because her parents were not 'sporting':

Rhianna: I wouldn't really say mum and dad were sporting parents. They don't really do any sport. My dad played wheelchair basketball for the majority of our childhood, but that was never something I showed an interest in ... I think it was just sort of friends and other people [why] I kind of took an interest in it.

Karen, a business student at University A, also explained that her brother, together with the influence of her father, played a crucial role in her socialization into football following the

death of her mother, whether this was as a direct participant in the sport or, indirectly, as a fan who watched football on TV:

My mum died when I was young so there was only my dad and my brother moved out when I was maybe 10 so from then on my dad had to raise me ... My dad's time was very, very thin but he was really supportive whatever I wanted to do if I asked him I would really like to try and do this he would try and figure out how to work it out ... But my brother was probably the one that got me into sport initially just because after my mum died he had to babysit me in the evening 'cos that (is) when my dad worked. So he would play games on his computer that were sport-related or he would want to go into the garden and maybe kick a ball about ... From then on I just had this major interest in sport – football specifically and then as I got older my dad watches nearly every sport going, so because he is normally sitting with Sky Sports on then I will sit and join him.

In contrast, other female students, in particular – who had few positive experiences of participating in a range of sports during childhood – came increasingly to perceive themselves as insufficiently good or competent at sport from a young age, which they associated with the little support they received from parents and friends (Pot et al., 2014; Quarmby & Dagkas, 2010, 2013; Smith et al., 2014). For example, Pam, who studied psychology at University A, emphasized the lack of sporting encouragement she received from her parents when she said:

They [parents] never encouraged me, they never discouraged me. It was like if I got it into my head I wanted to do something they would be like 'Yeah ok' but they would

never be like we want you to be on the netball team or something like that, they just let me make up my own mind. My dad has always cycled like all the time, he rides to work and back every day and that's like 12 miles each way and he is getting on a bit now.

The significance of this general lack of family socialization and early childhood experiences of sport for students of this kind was closely associated with their greater propensity to develop narrow sporting biographies. Pam continued by saying:

I wasn't really that keen on it. I liked certain things like I used to ride my bike a lot when I was little, but like in my own time when I fancied it, but at school I never wanted to get involved in things like that. And I think the type of people that did it as well, in like all the main teams and everything, it was all the same people and they all thought a lot of themselves ... and then there was like just average people like me, and then people who just tried to avoid everything, who wouldn't go to PE and just do one. I didn't want to get into that type of thing.

Another female psychology student at University B explained that from a young age, she did not see herself as being 'particularly good at sport', which she related to being excluded from other friendship groups that contained 'really sporty people':

Natalie: I didn't really get to do a lot and I wasn't particularly good at sport. Either I would be one of the last to get picked, so then I wouldn't want to participate as much. I think it goes round in a sort of circle; you kind of don't really bother putting the effort in to get better because you don't really see the point because there is [*sic*] loads of

other really sporty people ... I didn't used to like it to be honest, just didn't like doing it because I wasn't one of the sporty people.

Hannah, a business student at University B, drew similar comparisons between herself and other 'sporty' people and suggested that this contributed to her being generally disinterested in sport from the secondary school years:

I didn't really ... like (sport) interfering with studies ... I used to do sport in school but then I had a break and I didn't really want to go back into it ... 'cos I didn't think I would be very good compared to other people that are usually sporty ... I don't think it's as important.

The secondary school years, and often negative experiences from PE, were also attributed to the lack of participation reported by Susan, a psychology student at University A, who claimed that sport no longer interested her:

Susan: I'm not good at them, like in PE. Tried ... them [sports] and I'm not good at it. It didn't really interest me doing it, if I had an interest in it I would have tried to like adapt to it and like get better at it, but it doesn't interest me ... even if it was handed to me I wouldn't probably do it. It's something that I'm just not interested in.

As explained in Chapter 2, although habitus is formed most rapidly and impressionably during childhood and in family environments, it nevertheless continues to be modified (albeit more slowly) as the figurations of which people are a part expand and become more complex, and differentiated, as they get older (Dunning & Hughes, 2013; Elias, 1978; van Krieken,

1998). For the students in this study, extended family members (e.g. aunties and uncles), friends, and peers, became especially important features of their expanding figurations in adolescence and during the process of secondary socialization in which they internalized the actions and perceptions others had of their sporting ability (Green, 2010; Lareau, 2011; Pot et al., 2014). In particular, engaging with ‘sporty’ friends within figurations where sport participation was perceived as ‘normal’ enabled the most active participants to strengthen their family-based predispositions further, often in dynamic and reciprocal ways (Lareau, 2011; Thompson et al., 2003), so that sport participation became further embedded in their developing personality structures, or habitus (Dunning & Hughes, 2013; Elias, 1978). This was because, for the most sports-active, much of their leisure during adolescence was spent with like-minded friends who also valued sport, who developed similar self-identities in which sport participation was central, and who perceived themselves as being competent in sport. Students in these figurations were better able to draw upon the advantages they obtained from the accumulation of sporting and cultural capital during childhood to strengthen their peer-based networks, and gain acceptance among friends who were perceived to be ‘like them’, that is, as ‘sporty people’. The positive experiences generated by students’ (male and female) social engagement with others in their figurations during the teenage years thus reinforced their on-going psychological internalization of predispositions for sport participation, which occurred ‘at the level of the psyche, personality or habitus ... [and had] lasting social ramifications’ (Dunning & Hughes, 2013, p. 81) for their sport careers.

Those students who were among the least sports-active (especially female students studying business or psychology) during childhood, and who reported a general lack of family-based sports socialization, were by comparison to other students less likely to perceive themselves as ‘sporty’ and as possessing the required kind of competence and capital to derive positive

experiences from their peer-based networks. Accordingly, these students reported being excluded from figurations in which sport participation was valued, common and celebrated, and were instead bound-up with others who similarly avoided sport because they regarded themselves as being insufficiently ‘good’ or competent at the activities in question. In this regard, the least active participants repeatedly engaged in negative social comparisons with peers which led them to disengage from sporting networks, develop identities in which sport was more or less absent, and develop largely negative attitudes towards sport and their ability to participate (Smyth et al., 2014; Thompson et al., 2003). By the adolescent years, then, the least active students had already developed narrow sporting biographies and habituses in which a general disinterest in playing sport dominated their thoughts and actions, and in which sport was threatened by the presence of other more appealing leisure activities that characterized their transition to youth (Hendry et al., 1993; Haycock & Smith, 2014b; Roberts, forthcoming).

Changes in students’ sport participation during youth

The data presented above suggest that present-day differences in students’ sport participation appeared to have little to do with attending HE and the context of the universities involved in this study (see Chapter 5), and were instead more likely to be related to longer term differences in students’ participation that were relatively fixed by age 16 and grounded in the development of their childhood habituses. Indeed, it was clear that these differences were generated during childhood and remained especially resistant to change across the life course so that, regardless of sex, sports students were more likely to participate in a wider range of sports at least monthly compared to other students. It was also clear from the interviews held with students that their involvement in sport had declined, or at best remained the same, with age while at university (Haycock & Smith, 2014b; Irwin, 2004; Kwan et al., 2012). The

reasons students cited for this, included: their engagement in part-time work, university studies, increased responsibilities and changing priorities with age, and other lifestyle priorities which included spending time socializing with friends and partners. For example, one male rugby league player from University B explained how his sport participation at university had taken a 'back-seat' as other priorities became important in the following way:

Gaz: I think rugby wise I have probably got worse each year ... I think that is partly to do with drinking and socializing and partly to do with injuries and partly to do with the workload increasing. I think if you have got more going on around the sport then it does take a back-seat ... I still cared about sport, but then you get to university I think you grow up and when you grow up and realize that you need to start changing how you're behaving. I think you apply that to sport as well. I think once you grow up you start realizing how sport is not so serious to you when you have got other things to do.

The need to prioritize time allocated for other leisure activities, engage in paid work, and specialize in one sport while at university, were among the other constraints on participation that students associated with their increasing responsibilities. As one female sport student at University A explained:

Leonie: In my last year at uni I have stopped playing football because I have got too many commitments ... I have had to stop playing football ... I have had to sell my horse as well 'cos I haven't got time anymore ... I have been working, I have been doing university work, and I have been playing loads of cricket all over the place ... 'cos that's my sport what (*sic*) I put before quite a few other things.

One female sports student at University B explained her relatively stable level of participation during her years at university when she said:

Claire: I'd say I've probably done about the same, but I'd say I've probably had to force myself to do sport a little bit more than what I used to ... I've probably got a little bit more lazier at uni, because I haven't got my mum on my back ... I've probably changed the diversity of it like I've done a lot more sport, like different ones, like I've tried all of them, I've been like, 'Oh, may as well'.

In this regard, it was clear that although various changes were observed in different groups of students' sport participation during the time they spent at university, none of them reported any notable increases in their sport participation. Indeed, attending university seemed only to prolong and diversify the activities undertaken by those students who were appropriately predisposed to participate before attending university, rather than stimulating participation amongst a wider proportion of students. Universities also appeared to do little to revive or promote the participation of students who entered university with relatively low or no previous history of sustained sport participation (especially female non-sport students), whether in individual sports or a range of activities that were conducive to the development of longer-term participation (Coalter, 2013; Lunn 2010; Lunn et al., 2013). Instead, higher levels of present-day participation could in part be predicted by the extent to which students were able and/or motivated to maintain participation in three or more sports whilst experiencing the constraints posed on their participation by broader life transitions (Lunn, 2010; Lunn et al., 2013; Roberts & Brodie, 1992).

Other students also reported a general decline in the range of sports in which they were engaged during their university years alongside a decision to specialize in one specific sport. In doing so, some students – often those studying sport – maintained their participation in other individualized, flexible and fitness-orientated activities that were often viewed as being complementary to their ‘main’ sport. For example, one semi-professional male footballer from University A described how, because of the standard at which he was currently playing, his sport participation from age 16 was increasingly focused around fitness-orientated activities:

Paul: [Since 16 I have been] focusing more on ... fitness. I mean the running came 'cos I went boxing training from 16-18 years old ... I used to do a lot of jogging, sprinting ... especially now as it's pre-season time for me ... It's when you have to get fit everyone hates it so I have to do quite a bit of jogging, quite a bit of sprinting for that.

Rather than reporting any particular decline in participation whilst at university, other students reported a general shift in their participation away from competitive team sports towards more individualized, flexible and fitness-orientated activities before and during their time at university (Coalter, 2007, 2013; Fridberg, 2010; Vandermeerschen et al., 2014; Warde, 2006). In doing so, many of these students suggested that this sporting transition was one which had helped them sustain their overall level of participation as they got older. One female psychology student from University B explained how her transition from engaging in traditional team sports to using a gym enabled her to accommodate other priorities within her developing leisure lifestyle whilst at university as follows:

Rhianna: When I used to play for teams at home it's obviously three days a week commitment [to] training and games whereas coming to university I'm sort of having to work, do a degree and socialize ... I feel like it's [going to the gym] the sort of thing you can do in your own time, you're not letting anyone down by not being there so it's kind of what I have opted for.

Similarly, following her negative experiences of participating in the university basketball team and a desire to dedicate as much time as possible to her studies, another female psychology student at University A described her increasing preference for more fitness-orientated activities such as going to the gym thus:

Ann: I sustained it [sport participation at university]. I went to do basketball, and didn't work out and I found a new way of getting that kick that I got from basketball and I guess the gym was that way ... This is going to sound sad but I was actually reading most of the time. I became so focused, especially on psychology that I was doing nothing but reading.

In relation to changes in participation during the university years, there was also a distinct group of students who, despite not reporting an increase in their overall levels of participation, did report trying – in some cases regularly participating in – new sports at university as their engagement in traditional sport declined. In particular, these students reported that their participation in more individualized, flexible and recreational forms of particular sports increased, including Justin, a sport student at University B, who explained the changes in his participation at university as follows:

I think overall its ... gradually decreased, my competitive rugby ... Before I come to uni I was playing quite a good standard ... In first year there's not that much sort of work, you haven't got a great workload, so I could still like play on. I carried on first year to take rugby quite serious and we had quite a good team at uni, and I played for [team name] under 20s ... Training used to be on a Tuesday and Thursday night at [name of place] and my mates would be like, 'Oh, we're going out for a couple of beers tonight' and be like, 'Are you coming?' ... just tempting me to do other things ... I still tend to go to the gym ... You go out now and then and there's different things, so I still train in the gym but not as much. I play a bit of squash, I've been playing a lot of tennis lately, so I'll still say that I'm definitely participating in sport a lot. I play like squash maybe once or twice a week, gym probably four times a week, go for the odd run.

In a not dissimilar way, another male sport student at University B explained that he first played squash and did so regularly with friends during the time he spent at university, which was common among other sport students who had developed wider sporting repertoires than their peers before entering HE (Roberts & Brodie, 1992). He said:

Mike: I developed playing squash when I came to university, because it was something that I enjoyed, I could play with a friend or a housemate, and it was just something that I enjoyed. And running diminished to more of like a summer activity and the squash became, alongside football, something that I'd play all year round and helped maintain my fitness as well at the same time.

This diversification in students' participatory profiles is consistent with the findings of other studies of sport participation which have pointed to how the shift away from team games

towards an individualization of activity in which flexible, more recreational and self-organized activities (Fridberg, 2010; Lunn et al., 2013; Vandermeerschen et al., 2014; Warde, 2006) become more prominent features of sport careers as participants get older, especially by the time they finish statutory schooling and particularly during the transition from youth to adulthood (Coalter, 2007, 2013; Eime et al., 2013; Lunn et al., 2013). For many students (especially the least active) in this study, team games (e.g. rugby, cricket and basketball) became less popular after they had finished compulsory education because they became less organizationally convenient than other activities, including partner and individually-orientated sports (e.g. squash and tennis) and lifestyle activities (e.g. multi-gym and fitness) (Coalter, 2007, 2013; Lunn et al., 2013). As Chapter 5 makes clear, part of the increased appeal of engaging in more do-it-yourself styles of participation was students' concern with health and fitness (Bennett et al., 2010; Coalter, 2007, 2013; Warde, 2006), and a preference for activities that enabled them to engage in regular body maintenance and surveillance strategies that were believed to lead to the development of desired body images and shapes (Dworkin & Wachs, 2009; Widdop et al., 2014). A significant part of the increased preference for engaging in more individualized activities, however, was the changing circumstances in which students led their lives at university and the other competing demands non-sporting activity had for their time, money and attention (Hendry et al., 1993; Roberts, forthcoming). Even for the most committed and active sports participants, university was a period in their lives when they sought to accommodate an expanding range of leisure activities and work responsibilities (paid and academic) on which they placed equal, if not more, value. It seemed that students' ability to respond to the increasing, and at times seemingly contradictory, constraints generated by their expanding interdependency networks and transition to university was to a large extent dependent on the predispositions they had formed for sport participation during childhood (Birchwood et al., 2008; Nielsen et al., 2012;

Pot et al., 2014; Stuij, 2013). Indeed, those who had developed shallower sporting careers before enrolling in HE were more likely to increase their engagement in non-sporting uses of leisure that virtually extinguished their participation. Students with richer and broader sporting biographies grounded in their deep-seated habituses were, however, better able to accommodate their competing leisure interests alongside participation in some sport activity which helped preserve their sport careers during this vulnerable life-stage (Roberts, 2014; Roberts & Brodie, 1992).

Peer-oriented networks and students' university sport participation

As in earlier periods of their lives, the extent to which students reported being part of friendship networks where sport participation was normalized, highly valued and an important social activity at university was also an important predictor of their present-day sport participation. Those students who were the more frequent participants (especially male and female sports students), and who were also more likely to participate in more traditional forms of team sport, were also those who tended to be locked into figurations where sport participation was highly normalized. For these students the transition to university enabled them to participate with like-minded friends who were themselves sport participants, and who helped sustain their sport careers despite an increasing number of competing calls on their leisure time. Justin, a sport student at University B, described the protective effect of attending the university gym with some of his closest friends as follows:

I'd say there's probably about eight or nine of our like lads ... all of us go the gym ...

We all play sport, we all study sport and exercise ... the majority of us, three or four of my mates ... we'll go to the gym like four times a week together.

Similarly, Sue, a netball player who studied sport at University A, commented on how her sporting networks – which incorporated her university friends and sister – enabled her to preserve her continued enthusiasm for engaging in sport thus:

My home friends, like my close, close friends, they stopped doing sport when they had [the chance] to basically. A few of them played in the football team with us until we were about 17 but since then none of them do any sport (as) such like we do. It's just like my uni friends are the sporty ones ... Me and [sister's name] are the only ones out of our home group that actually still play sport ... I think we wouldn't be so eager to go and join a club or whatever if we didn't have each other.

The importance of friends to students' continued participation was clearly expressed by one male business student at University A – who currently reported participating in sport less than monthly – when explaining his own drop-out from skateboarding in the following way:

Matt: I have always been into skateboarding; it's a fun activity for me. I used to skate with a few friends who I don't particularly see that much anymore 'cos obviously people have gone off to uni in different places and you fall out with people so, that's probably why I don't skate very much anymore 'cos I haven't got anyone to go with.

Given the relatively high levels of social and emotional attachment students (especially female non-sports students) often placed on their existing friendship networks, many others explained that sport was not something that their friends did, and was not something they did to socialize as a group of friends. This point was neatly captured in the following extract taken from an interview with Emily, a psychology student at University B:

My housemates didn't have any interest in most sports; in fact I didn't think they had any interest in any sport ... A lot of my friends weren't really interested in that kind of stuff. I had somebody who was interested in swimming but I hate swimming so we didn't get along with that ... I think my uni friends were a lot less inclined to [physical] activity which encouraged me to do it less because I wanted to spend time with them because I knew we were all moving away at the end of the year especially in the third year. So it encouraged me to do it less because obviously I wanted to spend time with them and if they didn't want to get involved with activities, then I would drop it for them.

The changing priorities of students who were locked out of figurations which fostered on-going participation at university was also summarized by Susan, a psychology student at University A, who explained how the priorities of her female-dominated peer groups constrained her away from engaging in sport:

If you hang round with girls your opinions change about like sports and all that stuff. You think it's like boring to do, a waste of time, rather be out shopping (laughs) ... Hanging out just talking and chilling, socialize.

It is clear from these comments and those of similar students that, regardless of sex, having close friends at university who also valued and participated frequently in sport was particularly important to students' present-day participation. Mixing with 'sporty friends' whilst at university enabled those with more established sport careers in reconstituted figurations to sustain participation, whether in sports they had played previously, or in other forms of activity. In contrast, students who were less frequent participants, and who occupied

figurations before attending university in which sport participation was perceived to be less of a priority, also explained that very few, if any, of their closest university friends also participated in sport.

Summary

The purpose of this chapter has been to examine the relationships between students' social profiles and the development of their sport careers over the life course thus far and the importance of experiences during childhood and youth for students' current sport participation. It was concluded that the major differences in students' present-day sport participation can be traced to the differential experiences they had of childhood sports socialization, particularly in the family during leisure, and then later on with friends and peers during the secondary school years. Those students (especially males and sports students) who were the most active developed habituses during the course of family-based socialization that predisposed them to participate throughout the course of their lives, and enabled them to survive the successive transitions made between school and college, and between college and university. Thus, the 'sporting advantages' that authors have argued (Coalter, 2013; Lunn 2010; Lunn et al., 2013) accrue to those who stay longer in education were, in fact, an expression of the advantages students first developed during childhood and subsequently became expressed in educational contexts. In other words, inequalities in sport participation typically preceded their university sport participation which questions the degree to which there is, in fact, a direct HE effect on whether or not students engage in sport. The next chapter explores the differences in students' present-day participation in more detail and considers how differences generated in childhood were still evident in the university years and were having an additional impact on the frequency, kinds and styles of participation reported by students in the study.

Chapter Five

University Students' Current Sport Participation

Introduction

Having discussed the differences in the development of students' sport careers according to their subject of study, sex and present-day participation in Chapter 4, this chapter examines students' current sport participation (i.e. in the 12 months prior to being interviewed as part of this study) in greater detail. More specifically, the first half of the chapter analyses the levels, frequency and kinds of sports in which students participated, before drawing on the qualitative data generated from the semi-structured interviews to explore students' explanations for their current participation. Thereafter, the chapter explores where students tended to participate in sport with particular reference to the use of university and non-university sports facilities. The chapter concludes by analysing students' views and experiences of various sports provisions and the constraints on their sport participation.

Levels and frequency of students' current sport participation

As can be seen from Table 5.1, almost all students (91 per cent) in this study had participated in some form of sport at least monthly in the previous 12 months, though some differences were observed according to sex. More specifically, on average, almost three-fifths of males participated in sport at least 3 times per week compared to just over a one-third of females. Of greater significance, however, is that as with the development of students' sport careers, the clearest predictor of the level and frequency of students' sport participation was subject of study. All male students studying sport had participated at least weekly compared to less than six-in-ten of males studying business or psychology. Similarly, over four-fifths of female

Table 5.1 Levels and frequency of students' sport participation by sex and subject (n and %)

Frequency of sport participation	Males			Females	
	Overall	Sport	Business and psychology	Sport	Business and psychology
Less than monthly participation	11 (9.2)	0 (0.0)	3 (15.8)	1 (4.8)	7 (13.5)
At least monthly	108 (90.8)	27 (100.0)	16 (84.2)	20 (95.2)	45 (86.5)
At least weekly	88 (73.9)	27 (100.0)	11 (57.9)	18 (85.7)	32 (61.5)
1 day a week	9 (7.6)	0 (0.0)	3 (15.8)	1 (4.8)	5 (9.6)
2 days a week	27 (22.7)	5 (18.5)	4 (21.1)	3 (14.3)	15 (28.8)
3-4 days a week	39 (32.8)	16 (59.3)	2 (10.5)	13 (61.9)	8 (15.4)
5 or more days a week	13 (10.9)	6 (22.2)	2 (10.5)	1 (4.8)	4 (7.7)
Total	119	27	19	21	52

sport students had participated in sport at least weekly, while just over three-fifths of the females studying business or psychology did so. Given the widely acknowledged sex differences in sport participation in favour of males, it is particularly noteworthy that just over one-fifth of male students who studied non-sport courses participated 3 or more times per week compared to nearly two-thirds of females who were studying sport. Whilst subject of study was the clearest predictor of sport participation, it was equally apparent that sex accounted for additional differences in the frequency of students' sport participation. As Table 5.1 indicates, male sports students were notably more likely than their female counterparts to engage in sport 5 or more times per week.

The kinds of sports students participated in

As observed in relation to the frequency of sport participation, subject of study and sex were important predictors of the kinds of sports in which students reported participating. Both male and female students participated in a range of sports in the 12-month period prior to taking part in the study, with 37 sports being recalled by males and 43 by females. Less than one-half of the sample had played some form of competitive sport in the last 12 months and there were distinct differences in competitive participation related to sex and students' subject of study. Nearly three-quarters of male students had participated in competitive sport compared to approximately only one-third of female students (see Appendix B Table 5.1). Although still evident, these sex differences were moderated considerably by subject of study. For example, when comparing males and females studying sport, these differences narrowed markedly (93 per cent males; 71 per cent females), a finding which can be explained largely by substantially higher competitive sport participation being reported by female sport students. A further noteworthy observation is that although competitive sport participation was higher among males in all groups, when analysed according to sex, higher proportions of

females (seven-in-ten) participated in competitive sport than males studying non-sport courses (under one-half).

As in other studies of youth participation (Lunn et al., 2013; Scheeder et al., 2005; Telama et al., 2002; Wright et al., 2003), the kinds of sports in which students participated were related to gender and dominated by largely individualized, recreational and commercialized activities such as running/jogging outdoors, gym, and swimming (Table 5.2 and 5.3). Reflecting the gendered nature of participation, however, 5-a-side and 11-a-side football featured in the top five most widely played sports for males, while for females aerobics, exercise classes and netball were the other sports undertaken at least monthly (Lunn et al., 2013; Scheeder et al., 2005; Wright et al., 2003). When analysed according to subject of study, the most popular sports played at least monthly (Tables 5.2 and 5.3) were 11-a-side football (sports students) and cricket and golf (non-sports students). Although few subject-related differences were observed in relation to the kinds of sports males participated in, clear differences existed in the proportions of males participating in each sport by subject. Twice as many males studying sport, for example, used the gym than other males, while over four-fifths of male sport students engaged in running/jogging compared to approximately one-half of those studying business and psychology (Table 5.2). Among females studying sport, netball featured in the top five sports undertaken at least monthly, while for non-sport female students aerobics was the fifth most popular activity. It is also worth acknowledging that, for males and females, students studying sport were more likely to participate in these more traditional sports, namely, 11-a-side football (males) and netball (females). Finally, it was also notable that higher proportions of females studying sport participated in running/jogging outdoors and swimming compared to males studying non-sports courses.

Students' current sport participation in their own words

As noted in Chapter 4, the accounts many students gave of their current sport participation in the semi-structured interviews revealed that they tended to prefer individualized, recreational,

Table 5.2 Top 5 sports males played at least monthly by subject (n and %)

Sport	Overall	Sports	Sport	Sports	Business and psychology
Football (5-a-side)	35 (81.4)	Football (5-a-side)	23 (85.2)	Football (5-a-side)	12 (75.0)
Running/jogging (Outdoors)	32 (74.4)	Running/jogging (Outdoors)	23 (85.2)	Running/jogging (Outdoors)	9 (56.3)
Gym/fitness suite	28 (65.1)	Gym/fitness suite	22 (81.5)	Gym/fitness suite	6 (37.5)
Football (11-a-side)	18 (41.9)	Football (11-a-side)	16 (59.3)	Swimming	5 (31.3)
Swimming	16 (37.2)	Swimming	11 (40.7)	Cricket	4 (25.0)
				Golf	4 (25.0)
Total	43	Total	27	Total	16

Table 5.3 Top 5 sports females played at least monthly by subject (n and %)

Sports	Overall	Sports	Sport	Sports	Business and psychology
Gym/fitness suite	33 (50.8)	Running/jogging (Outdoors)	13 (65.0)	Gym/fitness suite	27 (60.0)
Swimming	33 (50.8)	Swimming	12 (60.0)	Swimming	21 (46.7)
Running/jogging (Outdoors)	31 (47.7)	Gym/fitness suite	6 (30.0)	Running/jogging (Outdoors)	18 (40.0)
Exercise classes	16 (24.6)	Exercise classes	6 (30.0)	Exercise classes	10 (22.2)
Aerobics	10 (15.4)	Netball	5 (25.0)	Aerobics	6 (13.3)
Netball	10 (15.4)				
Total	65	Total	20	Total	45

commercialized and flexible activities, alongside a small number of more traditional, competitive and structured sports (Coalter, 2013; Green, 2014; Scheeder et al., 2005). For example, 5-a-side football was evidently preferred to the full version of the game among males because of its flexibility and because of its sociable nature, as Jack, a business student from University B, explained in relation to his own participation:

Jack: It [5-a-side football] started off as a way to meet more people ... and have a bit of banter on a football pitch ... 5-a-side is a lot more flexible. You can just meet wherever, even at the park; just put your jackets down and kick about there. Or you can go to the sports hall or the astroturf ... and play there for a bit. 11-a-side is a lot more structured and if you did it for a team you have to meet and do training and stuff.

The individual and flexible nature of activities was also important to students' participation in a range of other activities as they attempted to fit their sport participation into their busy lives (Coakley & White, 1992; Haycock & Smith, 2014b; Roberts & Brodie, 1992). Indeed, much of the appeal of commercial and fitness-orientated activities like going to the gym – undertaken by many students – was associated with their organizational convenience, as one highly committed male gym user who was studying business at University A said:

Chris: I have just got that passion to ... get more size on (*sic*) [from going to the gym]. I have been thinking about in the future more bodybuilding competitions ... it's mainly more about yourself, rather than relying on everyone else. You can just do the activities yourself ... I can do it in the times I want ... it fits around my working life really.

Students' preference for the less time structured nature of these activities was also important to females whose views were neatly summarized in the following extract taken from an interview with Karen, a business student from University A, who said:

I started going to a gym like years ago and just really enjoyed the atmosphere ... I kind of like the occasion of going somewhere to ... exercise ... and aerobics and things I just find really fun ... I like the idea that you can go anytime to the gym and things like that. So it's just really useful like when you're studying if you have a few hours in the morning you can get up and go. Later at night you can go and you don't have to go by a schedule, whereas more scheduled training or things like that, you are kind of bound to what you need to do.

Overall, it was evident that the ability to integrate fitness-oriented activities around other work and study commitments was something on which all students commented positively when describing their participation in these activities (Coakley & White, 1992; Haycock & Smith, 2014a; Roberts & Brodie, 1992). Males' participation in commercial leisure centre based activities appeared to be largely confined to the use of a gym however, while female students were more likely to engage in a range of other largely facility-dependent commercialized activities such as swimming, exercise classes and aerobics. From the responses of most female students who chose to participate in a more diverse range of these activities, it was their relaxed, sociable and more moderate intensity that made them particularly appealing (Coakley & White, 1992; Smyth et al., 2014). The appeal of Zumba, for example, was described by Emma, a psychology student at University A:

You have a laugh in Zumba and people there are at the same kind of fitness anyway, so it doesn't matter. It was good ... you can go with your friends and it's not too hard work that you are sweating, and you can't speak or anything, and you just all have a laugh at the same time as doing exercising. So it's quite a good way of getting exercise done at the same time being with your mates as well.

In contrast to the recreational appeal and moderate intensity of fitness-oriented activities such as Zumba, other female students, typically those studying sport, who participated in these kinds of activities alongside more traditional competitive forms of sport did so for other motivations. For example, Claire, a sport student who played rugby union for University B, explained how she liked high intensity gym workouts that helped her to work towards her preferred body image:

It's probably more for my figure really to be honest ... I kind of like it because it does make me sweat a lot and because I like sport so much I feel like I've had a good workout when I'm sweating ... so I kind of feel like I've done loads of exercise ... and then I feel good.

Another notable feature of the views and preferences of some female students who both studied and played sport was the rather more positive views they expressed about participation in traditional sports such as netball. This point was clearly expressed by Sue, a sport student at University A, who said:

Netball is enjoyment ... for me, but say like other activities like running or swimming I don't necessarily do them for enjoyment, but I do it to keep fit really. Netball was more

... socializing as well and I do enjoy the game and ... I don't really feel like I'm exercising 'cos I enjoy it ... I prefer to go to exercise classes like boxercise rather than the gym 'cos it's just boring. I have to have the TV on at home just so I can watch it and think that I'm not doing it.

In contrast to the rather instrumental ways in which sports students (male and female) described the nature of their participation in fitness-related activities, many of those who participated in traditional sport regularly did so largely for the positive experiences they derived from participating. As well as the unpredictable nature of team sports, it was also clear that the sociability associated with their participation was particularly important to students' continued participation (Coakley & White, 1992; Green, 2014; Scheerder et al., 2005; Smyth et al., 2014). This having been said, as the next section indicates, both traditional team sports players and those who engaged in more individualized activities commented that the subcultures that surrounded traditional team sport participation had an important – whether positive or negative – impact on their own participation.

Team sport subcultures and students' sport participation

It was clear from the comments of those students who played university sport that there were often particularly strong subcultures associated with their university sports clubs which they themselves positively embraced and interpreted as having a largely positive impact on their own lived experiences of those clubs. Students tended to focus on the sociability of university sports clubs and, in particular, the social events that often revolved around the consumption of alcohol (Bryshun & Young, 1999, 2007; Dempster, 2009, 2011; King, 2000). Indeed, large proportions of similar-minded students were described by themselves, and non-club members, as encouraging the regular (often excessive) consumption of alcohol in peer-

oriented settings where ‘banter’ was central to the activities in question (Borsari & Carey, 2001; Clayton & Harris, 2008; Dempster, 2009, 2011; De Visser & Smith, 2007). For example, Justin, a sport student at University B, noted how the focus of his participation in rugby union had shifted from being centrally concerned with performance to placing greater emphasis on the social dimension of being in a university sports club thus:

There’s quite a big side to like the social, whereas like you play a game here and after the game there will be like people like, you know, ‘Oh, let’s go get on the beer’ and stuff like that ... It’s gone from playing with those sort of people (playing rugby at a high standard) to playing with lads who are playing rugby just because they want to have a few beers on that Wednesday night.

The importance and centrality of social drinking events and drinking games was also evident in the comments of female sports players. For example, Lisa, a sport student at University B, described the social activities associated with her rugby union team as follows:

There’s drinking games, like obviously you’ll get the ‘Tit of the Day’ who did the most stupid thing (laughs) in the match and then obviously they’ve got to down a dirty pint ... It starts by funnels on the pitch (laughs) ... and then pretty much every place that we go it’s a shot or a pint, or like the [pub] we get free shots so everyone will have at least three, four shots.

While these and other students who were part of university sports clubs often reflected upon the social activities in a generally positive way, other students with different experiences of those clubs and settings spoke rather more negatively about the social activities and networks

that characterized university sport clubs. Reflecting upon her experiences of playing for the university basketball team in her first year, and her broader experiences of university sports teams on student nights out, Rhianna, a psychology student at University B, explained that:

I don't really like the sports team ... I find them a bit cliquey ... There is a lot more [emphasis] on the social ... and if you don't come to socials, if you don't do all that shit, then they don't really like you ... They all sort of stick together and pick each other and they have a team that they like ... Even if you are good, if you're not sort of in the little in-group, then you're less likely to get a fair chance of being played as often.

Reference to the so-called 'cliquey' nature of sports teams was raised by a number of students to describe their experiences of university sport and, in particular, of the ways in which it discouraged them from participating in university sport. It was also clear that students believed the management and organization by student captains of clubs often resulted in team selection being based on social connections and popularity, rather than sporting ability or performance. The ways in which this impacted negatively on many students' sport participation was clearly expressed by one male who studied sport at University B, who said:

The people that play for the university team are very similar; it's a crowd that ... I don't think I fit in and there's a lot of needless inside politics involved and I just can't be doing with that, can't be bothered with it ... It's friends picking friends if you know what I mean. It's all around who are [*sic*] best mates with the captain.

It was clear, therefore, that while on the one hand the inherently social nature of university sport encouraged the participation of a significant minority of students, on the other, the exclusivity of such social networks and a perceived lack of belonging in clubs constrained the participation of many others (Collins, 2005; Delaney & Keaney, 2005). It was also widely acknowledged that the general performance-orientated and competitive nature of university sport was something that was only likely to appeal to a 'certain type of person'. More specifically, Sue, a sport student at University A, described the 'daunting' nature of university sport trials for new first year students in the following way:

If you come in as a fresher it's pretty daunting and it can affect you 'cos you have like hundreds of girls sign up for netball. About 80 turn up for the first trial, 50 for the next one just 'cos they don't like how its run and stuff ... (you've) have got to be a certain type of person to play and join a uni club 'cos it's not all about just playing; it's about the banter and everything as well and the social side ... There's drama when it comes to who's in what team and the people choosing do tend to get on their high-horse a little bit.

This comment summarizes many of the apparent limitations of policy (Haudenhuyse et al., 2014; Laakso et al., 2008; Sport England, 2014a; TNS-BMRB, 2013; Vandermeersch et al., 2014) in which club environments such as those found in university sports teams are used to help prolong and promote the participation among students. This was often because of concerns students had about selection, competition and sociability which generally discouraged them from wishing to participate in clubs. Given this, and especially the acknowledgement among students that university sport is 'not all about playing' and that the social side of club participation is also crucial (Bryshun & Young, 1999, 2007; Dempster,

2009, 2011; King, 2000), students who were not already locked into sporting networks or were part of social groups away from sport simply did not wish to participate in university sports clubs. For them, policies which promoted alternative ways of engaging in sport, including pay-as-you-play initiatives and more individualized activities such as attending the gym, were conducive to enhanced participation. This point was clearly expressed by one female psychology student who, having originally joined the basketball team at University A before leaving soon after, said:

Ann: I didn't really get along too well with the girls ... I do have my own group of friends so I don't see the necessity for me to join a sport just so I can form a social life when you already have one ... the multi-gym was more of an appeal because I could go whenever I wanted to and I had my circle of friends and they always came too when I wanted to go to the gym. Either way I always had somebody with me. It wasn't as fun ... the captain ... would always criticize certain individuals that had been very competitive but yet when she played herself she was beyond competitive ... not a pleasant individual.

In addition to the largely negative experiences some students had of university sport clubs, for some students the sociability generated in the context of university sports clubs was important for sustaining their on-going sport participation. Indeed, for this among other reasons, some traditional sport participants noted how other more individualized and fitness-orientated activities struggled to maintain their attention and were those in which they were less likely to continue participating. These issues were brought out particularly clearly by Lisa, a sport student at University B, who said:

I did swimming and like more individualistic sport, I didn't last long doing them (laughs). I preferred to play football and prefer obviously now to play rugby, because it's more team (focused) and it's more sociable and you've got that friend base as well.

When focusing on their recreational involvement with friends in other more commercially-orientated sports such as squash, it was apparent that traditional sports players enjoyed their participation in these activities for similar reasons to those associated with their club sport participation; that is to say, they were game-focused, sociable and encouraged 'banter'. For example, one male sport student who played club sport at University B explained his participation in squash by saying:

Mike: Obviously I enjoyed it and obviously (it's) a bit about the banter when you get beat or when you beat one of the lads as well, so there's been a lot of banter. But I just enjoy playing it mainly because it is fun as well as breaking a sweat.

However, other males who did not participate in club sport also described the sociability of activities as being particularly important to their more recreational and flexible sport participation. For example, Aaron, a business student at University A, explained his reasons for participating in a range of activities as follows:

Socializing with the 5-a-side football, it's enjoyable really, that's why we do it. That's why we do it 'cos it's enjoyable ... It's always with uni friends and it's usually on campus, sometimes local at the park and things like that ... I would rather do it [bmx] with friends ... it adds to the social aspect which makes it a bit more enjoyable and fun;

it's not just about the bmx then ... But I always jog alone ... you can go at your own pace and listen to your music.

In a not dissimilar way, one female psychology student at University B explained how 'having fun' when swimming and engaging dance were among her primary motivations for participating in these activities:

Rosie: Swimming and the dance because you're having like a bit more fun doing it especially if you go with someone that you know ... 'cos you can have a bit of a chat while you're doing it and make fun of each other but it's like a joking kind of thing ... It's just a bit more social ... I don't swim constantly for the whole time I'm there ... I swim for a bit and then have a chat.

The emphasis placed by non-members of university clubs on the sociability of activities may at first appear a little surprising given the obvious focus on the social dimensions of students' participation in university clubs described earlier. What appeared particularly crucial, however, were the rather different social contexts in which university sport and other activities took place. Non-university sports players evidently preferred activities that were more recreational, informal and undertaken by others in their friendship networks and which enabled them to choose who they played with, when, to what intensity, and in places of their own choosing (Coalter, 2013; Roberts, 2014; Wright et al., 2003). Although the self-regulated intensity of some fitness-based activities was important for some male students, this was particularly important for less frequent female participants studying either business or psychology for whom participation gains were most likely to be achieved via their

engagement in largely flexible, non-competitive and informal sport undertaken socially with friends.

Overall, it was clear from the comments of students who participated in the semi-structured interviews that the culture and practices of university sports teams simultaneously promoted the participation of a significant minority of students, whilst also excluding a notable majority who preferred to engage in activities that could be undertaken in less competitive, less 'cliquey', and more relaxed environments with people more similar to them. This is not altogether surprising for, as Chapter 1 made clear, the structure and culture of single-sport clubs can be experienced positively and negatively by participants (Coalter, 2007; Collins, 2005; Haudenhuyse et al., 2014), some of whom remain committed members while many more leave for various reasons having experienced them. For the participants in this study, university sports clubs may at first sight have appeared to be much more successful in typically attracting similar kinds of students with similar interests, and at developing forms of bonding social capital between their members (Coalter, 2013; Collins, 2005; Delaney & Keaney, 2005). But for many of the university clubs (like sports clubs more generally) described by students, they appeared to operate as often self-serving and relatively autonomous entities that, through their dominant practices (e.g. competitiveness, selection policies, social activities, and pre-formed networks), served to limit entry by those who failed, or did not wish, to act in ways that reinforced the prevailing social order (Coalter, 2007; Collins, 2005; Delaney & Keaney, 2005). The degree to which university clubs can thus be expected to generate bonding forms of social capital is perhaps more limited given that it appears more common for those who organize and already participate in sports clubs to bring in friends to play, without increasing substantially the number of 'new' friends via the club (Collins, 2005).

Body image: masculinity, sex and narcissism

Having examined the sub-cultures associated with university sport and the importance of positive sociable experiences to students' participation, it is now worth examining why students participated in more commercial and fitness-orientated sport. In this regard, it was clear that participation in activities such as the gym was driven primarily by concerns with body image, assuming personal responsibility for taking care of the body and one's health, and using the body as a means of presenting an appropriate self-identity (Bennett et al., 2010; Warde, 2006). As in other studies of university students (e.g. Engeln et al., 2013; Fredrick et al., 2007; Strelan & Hargreaves, 2005), most male students explained that they used the gym rather instrumentally to develop muscle mass because of concerns around masculinity, obtaining female attention, and developing sexual relations. One male business student at University B described how concerns with his own body image developed during his time at university:

Gaz: Before uni when I was doing power lifting I really didn't care about body image at all ... I never did any body building exercises or anything like that. But when you come to uni it's all about ... trying to get noticed and it is just a cheap way of getting noticed basically ... I think a lot of people feel the same. There is a lot of lads that are trying to get some girls at university; that's why they use the gym.

Another male business student at University B offered a similar, but even more narcissistic view, when explaining his motivations for using a commercial gym when he said:

Jack: Most of us just do the weights ... especially if there are ladies present in the gym ... Your loudness and willingness to do, anything goes ... to impress ladies; it really is

just to do that. I mean none of us are ever going to be power lifters or boxers or anything like that, but it is just maybe they will notice kind of thing, and they do to be fair. That's really all it is about ... I found that my cockiness was enough to get the ladies I didn't need to go to the gym, just banter with them ... It is just all about women really.

It was clear that, among some male students in the sample, using a gym (including a gym based at their university) to develop a masculine body image enabled them to get 'noticed' by female students and helped facilitate future sexual relations. For less sexually motivated gym users from University B, it was still evident that one of the primary motivators for their gym use was the intention of achieving a desired body image. It was also clear that males' attempts to obtain and maintain this masculine body image was a goal underpinned largely by concerns with identity, personal confidence and self-esteem. The comments of one psychology student at University A were particularly illustrative of other students' observations in this regard when he said:

I think image is a big thing ... I don't think people [would] go to the gym if image wasn't important. Image is important. Like I have got a few friends back home and they are pretty much gym fanatics, if you look at them it's crazy the way they look. I would never go that far but it is image, like I said image is key for every sport that you really get into ... I think one thing is obviously confidence in yourself, like everyone wants a bit. If you look good you're going to be a lot more confident with you daily routine. There are benefits in looking good to be fair ... like you attract people you know, the compliments and stuff, it helps everything; these are the benefits of looking good.

Although broadly similar motivations to the kind outlined here were applicable to most male gym users in the sample, there was also a small, but important, minority of male gym users who expressed distinctly higher levels of dedication to their gym participation and, therefore, may be appropriately described as ‘serious’- or ‘hyper’-gym users. For these users, their participation was clearly motivated by concerns over body image but, in contrast to many other users, they also appeared to be more intrinsically motivated by a desire to develop muscle mass and maximize their gym performance. They therefore tended to place considerably less emphasis on the sociability dimension of gym use reported by other students. For example, one serious gym user, Paul, a sport student at University A, described the development of his participation in the following way:

I used to be a skinny lad at high school. I only weighed about nine and half stone so I knew for my football I was going to have to bulk up a little bit, grow a bit. So that kind of pushed me to begin and with that helped me out when I was at college ... I prefer to train alone in the gym 'cos I focus more instead of just talking and get on with the workout ... I'm solely focused on training and getting better, getting stronger ... I had to put on the size when I was 16 so I was trying heavy weights ... eating plenty of food, taking mass gainers and all that kind of thing. And then by second year of college I had put on about five stone so I was 14 and a half stone ... it was pretty much last year ... when I thought I have got the size now I need to define it.

For females who used gyms – whether commercially or on university campus – body image concerns were far more closely aligned with achieving a more stereotypically feminine body, characterized by thinness and muscle tone (Bennett et al., 2010; de Bruin et al., 2009; Slater & Tiggemann, 2011; Strelan & Hargreaves, 2005). To achieve this feminized ideal body

image, female students like Ann, who studied psychology at University A, emphasized the importance – as they saw it – of improving self-confidence and physical fitness as follows:

I like to stay physically fit; that's the only reason why and I just wanted to improve my self-appearance a bit. I have loads of confidence but I just wanted to get down a size ... if I didn't go I would feel quite lazy so I had to go and it becomes part of routine so I never broke it, it was like a cycle ... I get to stay physically fit and I get to look the way I have always [wanted] ... body image ... that would be the main thing.

Like some of their male peers, female students such as Ann became committed gym users because of intrinsic motivations that appeared to be largely influenced by social pressures to achieve an ideal body image, or more precisely, body weight (Dworkin, 2003; Dworkin & Wachs, 2009). For some young women losing weight, or at least maintaining a particular desired weight, through their engagement in fitness-orientated activities was the primary means by which they could achieve this ideal body image (de Bruin et al., 2009; Slater & Tiggemann, 2011; Strelan & Hargreaves, 2005). As Lisa, a sport student at University B explained, participating in running helped her to manage the difficulties she felt she experienced when trying to maintain a desired body weight:

The main reason [for running] was to lose weight ... I've always had battles with my weight, like from a really young age gone from one extreme to the other, so it's always been the one thing to sort of try and maintain that really ... just get my fitness up as well.

Another female student studying psychology at University B also noted how she used the gym to lose weight and to militate against other unhealthy behaviours. The gym, for her, was mainly about ‘weight loss’:

Jane: [The gym was] A weight loss thing. Throughout high school I didn’t really care about my weight or anything and obviously there comes a point when I was like ‘Crap I need to start going to the gym’. So that’s when I started going to the gym, and also because of all the drugs I was doing: I was also really down a lot and I found that really, really helped me get out of that and become more motivated in my life.

Although fitness-oriented activities were perceived by many females as an important vehicle for weight management, some male students also explained that the maintenance of weight – particularly in combination with broader fitness-related goals – was an important motivation for them (Engeln et al., 2013; Fredrick et al., 2007; Warde, 2006). In relation to his own recreational running, Mike, a sport student at University B, said:

It’s [running] just maintaining fitness really. It’s just because I don’t want to be going into pre-season absolutely dying. It’s just to keep that level of fitness ... so I don’t become like, huge, because my weight does fluctuate quite a lot. And I think it’s just to keep me ticking over really.

Finally, it is important to note that while many students pointed towards the physical health benefits of regular exercise, many others tended to focus on its psychological benefits. In particular, students tended to note how exercise had a positive impact on their self-confidence and self-esteem, which – as discussed above – was closely related to their sensitivity towards

their own bodies. The following comment from Paul, a sport student at University A, however, is indicative of a range of other health-related reasons described by a significant minority of other male and female students:

I think as you get older you realize the importance of staying healthy, staying fit, so that helps you individually ... [You] go into the gym to make sure you are trying to eat as good as you can: nice and healthy eating ... you do have it in your head that you have got to try and get healthy ... I would say it helps that social side; it helps psychologically as well because ... mentally you feel not as fit, healthy. It helps your confidence, helps your self-esteem.

Supporting the conclusions drawn from the quantitative data on students' sport participation, it was evident from students' recollections that many of them preferred body image-oriented activities that were more individualized, flexible, informal, and self-regulated (Prichard & Tiggemann, 2011; Slater & Tiggemann, 2011) alongside, for a smaller minority of students, participation in more traditional club sport. In doing so, the comments of many of the students who engaged in body maintenance and cultivation strategies via gym-going were expressive of a so-called distinctive attitude adopted by those from the middle classes, especially in neo-liberal economies such as Britain (Bennett et al., 2010; Warde, 2006; Widdop et al., 2014). In particular, the strategies adopted by students were bound up in their highly individualized notions of health where personal responsibility for the body, and cultures of self-monitoring, dominated many of their concerns (Crossley, 2006; Dworkin, 2003; Dworkin & Wachs, 2009). The sometimes gendered approaches students reported to self-presentation meant males, in particular, were concerned with cultivating idealized muscular and so-called male bodies, alongside weight management strategies intended to

maximize body confidence, which they also often related to their desire for being more sexually attractive to women (Crossley, 2006; Engeln et al., 2013; Fredrick et al., 2007). For females, however, their commentaries focused more specifically and narrowly around concerns for fitness and weight management, which they typically associated with perceptions of their body weight and psychological well-being (particularly self-esteem and self-confidence) (Pridgeon & Grogan, 2012; Strelan & Hargreaves, 2005), largely in the absence of muscularity-focused talk which dominated the discussions with their male counterparts. As the next section indicates, students' self-presentational concerns were also evident in other aspects of their sport participation, particularly in relation to the use of university gym and sports settings.

Locations for students' sport participation

The most popular locations for students' sport participation incorporated a range of public and private leisure provisions. Of particular interest, however, was the use by students of university and non-university sport provisions (Sport England, 2013, 2014c; TNS-BMRB, 2013), especially when analysed according to students' sex, subject of study and residential status. In this regard, the use of different kinds of leisure provision by males and females at least monthly in the last 12 months was, however, closely related to the gender-differentiated nature of students' sport participation (Table 5.4). For example, when compared to females, males were over two-fifths as likely to have participated in sport at an outdoor university facility/court, and over four times as many males did so at a local park or playing fields, often for sports such as football. On the other hand, given their particular preference for more individualized and commercially-oriented sports, females were more likely than males to use local leisure centres not owned by their respective universities. Focusing on the use of university sports facilities by sex, it is clear from Table 5.4 that, with the exception of

university sport halls, males were more likely than female students to make use of a range of university facilities, but the most popular sites for participation among both male and female students were those more commonly associated with participation in more individualized and flexible activities (e.g. local leisure centres and roads or pathways).

Tables 5.5 and 5.6 present data on male and female students' most popular locations for sport participation by subject of study. In almost all areas of provision, sports students were more likely to participate than those studying business or psychology. For example, nearly two-thirds of male sports students participated in a university sports club or team compared to less than one-fifth of other males. Similarly, for female students, exactly two-thirds of those studying sport participated in a university sport club or team at least monthly compared to one-fifth of other females. Although there were some exceptions (e.g. the use of an outdoor university facility/court among males, and the use of a university gym among females), the tendency for sports students to make use of a range of provisions was not confined to locations commonly associated with traditional sports. For example, over two-thirds of male sports students compared to fewer than one-half of other males exercised on roads and/or pathways, while a similar pattern was observed for females studying sport (60 per cent) compared to those studying business or psychology (33 per cent). Consistent with findings reported earlier, when comparing males' and females' participation according to subject of study, it was again notable that, on the whole, female sports students were more likely to participate across a range of locations (e.g. university sport clubs or teams, local leisure centres, roads and/or pathways and outdoors in a natural setting) when compared to males studying either business or psychology.

Table 5.4 Top 10 most popular sites for students' monthly sport participation by sex (n and %)

Type of club, facility or location	Males	Type of club, facility or location	Females
Roads/pathways	26 (60.5)	Local leisure centre/sports hall	38 (58.5)
Outdoor university facility/court	21 (48.8)	Roads/pathways	27 (46.5)
Local leisure centre/sports hall	20 (46.5)	Outdoors in a natural setting	26 (40.0)
University sports club/team	19 (44.2)	University sports club/team	21 (32.3)
Local sports club/team	18 (41.9)	University gym/fitness suite	16 (24.6)
Local park/playing fields	17 (39.5)	Local sports club/team	13 (20.0)
University gym/fitness suite	16 (37.2)	University sports hall	12 (18.5)
Local outdoor facility/court	11 (25.6)	At home	8 (12.3)
Outdoors in a natural setting	8 (18.6)	University swimming pool	6 (9.2)
University swimming pool	8 (18.6)	Outdoor university facility/court	5 (7.7)
		Local park/playing fields	5 (7.7)
Total	43		65

Table 5.5 Top 10 most popular sites for male students' monthly sport participation by subject (n and %)

Type of club, facility or location	Sport	Type of club, facility or location	Business and psychology
Roads/pathways	19 (70.4)	Outdoor university facility/court	10 (62.5)
University sports club/team	16 (59.3)	Roads/pathways	7 (43.8)
Local leisure centre/sports hall	15 (55.6)	Local leisure centre/sports hall	5 (31.3)
Local sports club/team	14 (51.9)	Local sports club/team	4 (25.0)
University gym/fitness suite	13 (48.1)	Local outdoor facility/court	4 (25.0)
Local park/playing fields	13 (48.1)	Local park/playing fields	4 (25.0)
Outdoor university facility/court	11 (40.7)	University gym/fitness suite	3 (18.8)
Local outdoor facility/court	7 (25.9)	University swimming pool	3 (18.8)
Outdoors in a natural setting	6 (22.2)	University sports club/team	3 (18.8)
University sports hall	5 (18.5)	Outdoors in a natural setting	2 (12.5)
University swimming pool	5 (18.5)		
Total	27		16

Table 5.6 Top 10 most popular sites for female students' monthly sport participation by subject (n and %)

Type of club, facility or location	Sport	Type of club, facility or location	Business and psychology
University sports club/team	12 (60.0)	Local leisure centre/sports hall	26 (57.8)
Local leisure centre/sports hall	12 (60.0)	Outdoors in a natural setting	17 (37.8)
Roads/pathways	12 (60.0)	Roads/pathways	15 (33.3)
Outdoors in a natural setting	9 (45.0)	University gym/fitness suite	14 (31.1)
Local sports club/team	6 (30.0)	University sports club/team	9 (20.0)
University sports hall	5 (25.0)	University sports hall	7 (15.6)
University swimming pool	5 (25.0)	Local sports club/team	7 (15.6)
Outdoor university facility/court	3 (15.0)	At home	7 (15.6)
University gym/fitness suite	2 (10.0)	Local park/playing fields	3 (6.7)
Local park/playing fields	2 (10.0)	Outdoor university facility/court	2 (4.4)
		Local outdoor facility/court	2 (4.4)
Total	20		45

Finally, as shown by Table 5.7, residential students were more likely to participate in sport across a range of university sport provisions (e.g. university sport club or team, outdoor university facility or court and university gym) when compared to commuting students (TNS-BMRB, 2013). For example, when focusing on the proportions of students who played for a

Table 5.7 Top 10 most popular sites for students' monthly sport participation by residential status (n and %)

Type of club, facility or location	Residential	Type of club, facility or location	Commuting
Local leisure centre/sports hall	41 (51.3)	Local leisure centre/sports hall	17 (60.7)
Roads/pathways	39 (48.8)	Roads/pathways	14 (50.0)
University sports club/team	36 (45.0)	Local sports club/team	11 (39.3)
University gym/fitness suite	27 (33.8)	Outdoors in a natural setting	11 (39.3)
Outdoor university facility/court	25 (31.3)	Local park/playing fields	6 (21.4)
Outdoors in a natural setting	23 (28.8)	University gym/fitness suite	5 (17.9)
Local sports club/team	20 (25.0)	University sports club/team	4 (14.3)
Local park/playing fields	16 (20.0)	At home	3 (10.7)
University sports hall	16 (20.0)	Local outdoor facility/court	2 (7.1)
University swimming pool	14 (17.5)	Local gym/training facility	2 (7.1)
		Local swimming pool	2 (7.1)
		University sports hall	2 (7.1)
Total	80		28

university sport club or team at least monthly, residential students (45 per cent) were over three times as likely to have done so compared to their commuting peers (14 per cent). Similarly, for the use of university-based gyms, almost twice as many residential students used this facility compared to their commuting peers. Therefore, it would seem that the

access gained to university sport provision through enrolment at university is more likely to benefit and/or be taken advantage of by residential students, especially males, living on or near to campus than other students. The explanations for these quantitative patterns in students' use of facilities were to be found in the perceptions and experiences they recalled in the semi-structured interviews.

Students' views and experiences of sports facilities

In the light of claims that are often made about the presumed (positive) impact of generous, low-cost, convenient university sport facilities on students' sport participation (Burke et al., 2006; Coalter, 2013; Coalter et al., 1995; Leslie et al., 1999; TNS-BMRB, 2013), the final section of this chapter examines students' perceptions of and satisfaction with these facilities. The quantitative data reported above and the recollections students gave in the semi-structured interview seriously question the extent to which university sport facilities are equally available and suitable for use by all students. Firstly, it would appear that the extent to which university facilities are conveniently located and accessible to all students is dependent upon students' residential status and associated privileges this has for those living either on, or close to, campus (TNS-BMRB, 2013). Furthermore, it would also seem fair to suggest that the extent to which students were able to take advantage of university sport provisions was largely contingent upon their satisfaction with those facilities, and their personal experiences of sport before they attended university. Those students who were most likely to use university sports facilities were also those who were already appropriately predisposed to do so, as the comments of one male residential sport student at University B indicate:

Barry: I was living on campus and it was something that ... appealed to me before I went to uni, but because it was that accessible and stuff it made it easier kind of thing ... the cost and accessibility, like prior to leaving home the nearest gym was like 15, 20 minutes away, whereas at uni it's one minute walk kind of thing, and obviously it's a lot cheaper.

Despite the obvious importance of students' predispositions to participate in sport, the clear patterns in their use of university facilities associated with their residential status should not be downplayed and was clearly supported by the comments of other students. For example, even among those who participated less frequently and were seemingly less committed to sport, some residential students with sport profiles of this kind were able and more likely to take advantage of university facilities than their commuting peers. For example, Jack, who studied business at University B described how he made use of the university swimming pool in the following way:

It's open and it's free, so that's a lot easier to get into. The fact that it's free means people use it a lot more than the gym I think. 'Cos the gym you have to pay for, obviously, but because the pool is free people use it; you start to recognize people from the swimming pool and again you start to make mates.

Although the accessibility and cost of university facilities helped maintain some students' sport participation, the extent to which those facilities were seen as cheap, convenient and suitable (Burke et al., 2006; Coalter, 2013; Coalter et al., 1995; Leslie et al., 1999; TNS-BMRB, 2013) was generally limited to a minority of students. Indeed, on the whole, it was clear that, despite being heavily subsidized, many students felt that some university sport

facilities (e.g. the university gym) were expensive and inconvenient given their comparatively low incomes. For example, one female sport student at University B explained why she no longer had a university gym membership thus:

Claire: I stopped doing the gym because I couldn't afford it ... I always found that the first term was the hardest term for money. I don't know why, even though I'd worked over the summer and saved up money I found the first term I was always more broke (laughs), I was like, 'Oh crap, I've got no money', so I always thought, 'Well, that extra 135 quid or whatever it is, that could go a long way, that could be quite a few weeks of food (laughs). Well, I can go running for free on the canal, I can go swimming, I can leave that out, if I wanna do sit-ups and press-ups I can'.

Similarly, in addition to the perceived dominance by traditional sport team players of a range of sports facilities, another business student from University A noted that the expense and lack of flexibility of gym memberships were among the reasons why she had failed to maintain a regular membership. She said:

Holly: The sports facilities are just for sports students and not for us, so that's sort of an invisible barrier that actually I can't do that. I tried to go to different gyms but because of different membership problems you can't get a membership. I think one gym does a membership for four months. You can't actually get a membership for one month, two months, and see whether it's good for you or not.

Female students, in particular, also tended to be rather more critical of the convenience and quality of the sport facilities at both universities, especially when comparing their

experiences with other private leisure provisions. In contrast to the views and experiences of many male students, there was a view among some female students that the university facilities they used would be more accessible if they were free to use, if the opening times were more flexible, and if the quality of the changing rooms improved significantly, all of which are known to be key predictors of facility satisfaction (Rowe, 2012). For example, in relation to her own limited use of the swimming pool at University B, one female psychology student said:

Natalie: I think swimming is quite easy to participate in, especially at this university because its free but then it's not open all the time so you have to make sure you go at specific times. And then you have got the hassle of changing rooms and all that stuff ... That's part of the reason why I didn't always like going swimming, 'cos that's just a pain in the arse.

These views and experiences of university facilities were by no means limited to less frequent female sport participants, or to the university swimming pool. One female sport student at University A, for example, also offered a similar view of her university gym and changing facilities when she said:

Sally: I don't think the university gym is particularly good and it is really quite small so when it gets busy it is ridiculous. There's only two running machines, two or three bikes, there is hardly anything really ... The showers are communal. I'm not the biggest fan of having a communal shower; it would be definitely be better if there was a cubicle ... If you don't like the equipment, and if it's small, it's not a very nice environment really. So I would rather go somewhere nice 'cos I will probably be going on my own.

Another sports-active female psychology at University B similarly described her university facilities as ‘crap’ and ‘uncomfortable’:

Jane: The university facility is just really crap: it’s the worst. It’s like a home gym, it’s just home gym equipment and I just need at least a decent treadmill and a decent cross-trainer and then fair enough if there is nothing else there but that’s the main reason. And obviously, it’s really small and it’s really awkward when, you know, when you are trying to work out and you’re a little bit uncomfortable.

The experiences of regular female participants from both universities were indicative of the general view of female students, particularly when focusing upon their satisfaction with the university gym and changing room facilities. It was clear that the general perception among female students was that the gyms at both universities were too small, at times too busy, and the quality of the changing rooms, and particularly the communal showers, made them reluctant to use these facilities (Leslie et al., 1999; Rowe, 2012). For these students university sports facilities were perceived as being ‘not very nice environments’ in which they often felt ‘awkward’ and ‘uncomfortable’, which limited the degree to which those kinds of facilities could promote participation among females (Downward & Rasciute, 2014).

Females’ uneasiness with the use of university gyms was heightened further by what they regarded as the over-powering presence of males and the generally masculine nature of these contexts (Dworkin, 2003; Dworkin & Wachs, 2009; Pridgeon & Grogan, 2012; Slater & Tiggemann, 2011). For these reasons many females used local off-site gyms that were generally part of private leisure centres, health clubs, or hotels, in which to exercise and to avoid the gaze of male students (Crossley, 2006; Dworkin, 2003; Dworkin & Wachs, 2009;

Slater & Tiggemann, 2011). The decision by many active females to use off-site private provision was neatly captured in the following extract taken from a psychology student at University B:

Rhianna: I find the uni gym sometimes a bit annoying 'cos its sort of full of ... lads ... with their muscles and spending all day looking at themselves ... [The hotel gym] it's just nicer, the changing rooms are nicer; you can go to the gym and shower and get dressed. I know it sounds soft but it's kind of like when I used to come to the uni gym 'the showers aren't great are they?' ... The [hotel] changing rooms obviously are a lot nicer and shower facilities ... There is room to actually shower, individual shower ... there is a hairdryer and whatever else where you can go to the gym and come out and not look like you have been to the gym. You don't have to like be a sweaty mess or have soaking wet hair or whatever.

The experiences of university gyms outlined in the aforementioned testimonies of female students were not surprising given the comments of other university gym users, particularly males, who noted explicitly that among the reasons why they chose to use the university gym was that it represented an opportunity to meet other body image conscious students whom they found sexually attractive (Crossley, 2006; Dworkin, 2003; Pridgeon & Grogan, 2012). Reflecting upon his own reasons for using the university gym, one male sport student at University B, for example, explained:

Barry: It seems more appealing to go to the uni facilities and obviously you meet people and there might be more people that are better on the eye kind of thing (laughs) ... You meet people before that have said, 'Oh, I've seen you in the gym and stuff like

that', so it's kind of like broke the barrier with the social aspect just from going in the same environment as them.

Although far more common among male university gym users, similar views were also expressed by a small minority of female students including Cathy, a business student at University B, who said:

Going to the gym, me and my mates used to use it as an incentive to perve over the lads we fancied from our halls ... I wasn't too fussed that the lads were there; half the time it was a bonus but I know some of my friends would prefer to go to a women's only class 'cos they get a bit self-conscious ... It didn't bother me really ... one of my friends was quite conscious about it 'cos she really liked this lad last year that used to go there every day but I think a lot of them were, 'We just we want to get fit, to feel healthy'.

For many other female students, however, exercising in front of their university peers was experienced rather more negatively, often in the ways described by Pam, a psychology student at University A, who explained that students' concerns regarding their appearance were likely to discourage them from wanting to participate at her university gym:

I am more focused on keeping myself slim ... I wouldn't want to be muscly or anything ... Whereas all the weights, it's all the lads there trying to look hard ... All the lads trying to get muscley or whatever and then more girls on like the running machines and bikes and stuff. And then you would get like a few lads doing everything, but you would rarely see girls in the weights bit ... If anyone like male and female was quite

self-conscious or whatever, about how they looked, and they come to uni and people only see you in your normal clothes and everything, I suppose it would put some people off to be there in like sweating and everything looking minging.

The concern Pam expressed about appearance in the context of a university gym was something that was particularly evident among female students and was not surprising given the narcissistic, body image and sexually-oriented comments from male students discussed earlier. In this regard, the comments of female students in this study suggested that underlying concerns related to their body image and appearance were exacerbated by the thought (and experiences) of exercising in the same place as their male peers. One female sport student from University B explained why she would not exercise in a university gym – where she would have to run whilst being observed by other people that she knew – in the following extract:

Davina (original emphasis): I probably wouldn't like to run just like on a treadmill for ages; it's just boring and ... people are *there*. They can watch what you're doing and I'd rather them not watch what I did ... I just don't want people to see me like doing exercise ... because I look horrendous (laughs). Like with my hair like all scraped back and stuff there, so maybe it's appearance-based.

It was clear that, for Davina and many other female students, concerns with their appearance while exercising and being observed by others were among the most prominent barriers to their use of a university gym. Even among females who did participate in sport, they were particularly aware of how their participation made them appear unfeminine (Strelan & Hargreaves, 2005). The extent to which females recalled experiences of this kind was not

limited to the university gym, but was also raised in relation to university swimming pools. Another female business student at University B articulated these concerns about the use of other university sports facilities when she said:

Cathy: I did go to the uni gym but all my mates would go swimming and I'm like 'Yeah that's a little bit wrong'. I don't want to see lads that are on my course in the swimming pool, that's just weird ... It's because you are like half naked. Going to the swimming pool, I wouldn't do because I know a lot of people there ... It probably is just me being self-conscious I reckon ... It's just kind of a fear of if I go in and see a lad I fancied from first year, I would be like 'Yep, I'm not going in there, especially in my swimming cap looking a bit sexy'.

Females from University A also commented on their dislike of the university gym and, in particular, the fact that if they were to participate in such settings they would be constrained to do so under the gaze of self-loving male students (Crossley, 2006; Dworkin, 2003; Pridgeon & Grogan, 2012). One of many clear examples that might be cited of the key differences between the sites available for female participation and the greater appeal of some compared to others, was evident from the following extract from one female sports student who attended University A:

Sarah: It's not a good look sweating in front of a lot of people ... I don't mind when I play netball in the sports hall and I will come out sweating, or if ... we have got a girl that does aerobic classes and she does [an] aerobics class for us. I don't mind if I sweat then but ... I just don't like the gym ... The girls go more on the aerobic exercises and the boys just go and look at themselves and do the weights.

In summary, it was clear that in addition to the quality of both university's sport facilities – in particular, the university gym, swimming pool and changing rooms – another important barrier to females' use of some facilities was their concern about their appearance while exercising in the presence of others, particularly their male peers. What is of particular importance here, however, is that relatively independently of other undesirable features of university sport facilities, these concerns alone were often enough for some female students to choose to participate at more expensive, less convenient, but more aesthetically appealing off-site leisure facilities (Rowe, 2012). The uncomfortable nature of participation at university facilities for some females and, consequently, their decision to participate off-site, was clearly expressed by another female psychology at University A, who said:

Emma: I didn't want to bump into people at uni so I went to a different gym just 'cos it's bigger as well more facilities ... To be honest, the gym here is literally full of muscley men ... I just want to go to use the equipment and I don't want to go somewhere where they are competing for their muscles. I don't want to bump into other people ... You just don't feel comfortable exercising in a place like that. I would much rather go to somewhere else where nobody knows each other and you just get on with it and you are more likely to do more exercise than somewhere like that ... I don't want to be watched when I'm doing exercise ... Makes me uncomfortable ... They might compare ... body image and who's better at what ... You know, if you're not very good at it, then you don't want to be judged by someone that's watching you, especially if they know you.

The comments of students in this study were to a large extent consistent with the observations Dworkin (2003) reported in her ethnographic study where women, in particular, were said to

be excluded from areas designated for weight training which were usually dominated by males and were instead more likely to occupy cardiovascular equipment. As in other studies (e.g. Dworkin, 2003; Pridgeon & Grogan, 2012), the highly masculinized and sexualized environment which characterized relations in the university gym, and males' domination of space (usually weights), did not prevent some women from continuing to use the university gym, often with same-sex friends. For many other females, however, the presence of males and the intimidating practices they were perceived to deploy in those settings led them to exercise in other non-university settings. Among the reasons for this, as Dworkin (2003) noted, was the avoidance of the 'male gaze' to which they felt subject from male gym-goers whom they may know. In particular, these female students were particularly critical of the objectifying gym environment which included, among other features, full-length mirrors, opportunities for direct social comparison with other women, and self-presentational concerns which related to the presence of sweat and use of revealing clothing (Prichard & Tiggemann, 2005; Slater & Tiggemann, 2011). There was also some (albeit limited) evidence from female students that they also used the university gym to observe or gaze at men whom they found sexually attractive, which is often neglected in analyses of gender relations and exercise settings (Crossley, 2006). Indeed, as Crossley (2006) found in his study of a health club in Greater Manchester, although men were more likely to report using the gym environment to gaze overtly on female students and their bodies, some women also did so for their own gratification, for developing relations with men, and for gaining social acceptance among those to whom they were sexually attracted.

Beyond these motivations for attending the university gym, students reported having a repertoire of motives for gym-going (Crossley, 2006). These included: enjoyment (incorporating motivations such as sociability and those linked to developing intimate or

sexual relations with others), relaxation and release, escapism, developing the physical self and mitigating against other health behaviours (especially weight gain), supporting sports performance, managing experiences of guilt generated by missing sessions, and, less commonly, because of the financial commitments made via membership fees (Crossley, 2006). Accordingly, the motivations for students' gym use cannot simply be reduced to single causes such as health and fitness, as important as these were, but must instead be related to the multiple motivations and interests of gym-goers which, to a greater or lesser degree, are likely to change 'over the course of what ... we might call the "moral career" of the gym-goer' (Crossley, 2006, p. 25). Regardless of the primary motivations students recalled for their use of the gym, whether on campus or in other settings, exercising in those contexts as well as engaging in diet and body surveillance enabled them to represent themselves, their values, and cultural capital symbolically to others within their various figurations (Bennett et al., 2010; Warde, 2006).

Other constraints on students' sport participation

Having examined some of the most prominent reasons for students' differential use of university sport facilities above, particularly in relation to sex, it is worth briefly exploring some of the other constraints on students' sport participation, namely, obligations associated with their university study and the degree of structure within their university lives. It was clear from students' responses that they perceived their workload and the structure of their lives at previously to differ considerably during the three years they spent at university. Many students discussed how they perceived their workload (academic and paid) and commitment to their studies increased by their final year of study (Christie, 2009; Furlong & Cartmel, 2009; Hall, 2011; Reay et al., 2010). Furthermore, it was clear that students' approach to their studies was very much inter-dependent with their lifestyles more generally. Students

generally noted that as they progressed through their years at university they tended to place less emphasis on socializing with large groups of other students and instead their spare time was spent with a smaller group of significant others (Brooks, 2007). These changes in students' university lives – as they made the transition through consecutive university years – were clearly expressed by one business student at University B who described the changes in the way she spent her time from first to third year in following way:

Hannah: First year was a party; it was more important knowing people so ... you go to places, you stay out all night because that's what others are doing and you don't want to be the odd one out so it's more that ... Second year is a bit more grounded, you sort of know like you have known your friends for a year if they are the right people or not and your group kind of gets smaller, so you don't associate yourself with as many as you did in first year. And then third year it's all about work and your dedication; it's your last chance to get a really good degree so you put all your effort into it.

Similar changes in students' lives to those described above often came to influence their participation in sport as they progressed through their university years and the importance they placed on sport, and often particular kinds of sports, had to compete with other important aspects of their lives. These included students' use of leisure time (Aldridge et al., 2011; Kelly et al., 2011; West, 2009), engagement in non-sporting extra-curricular activities (Bexley et al., 2013; Broadbridge & Swanson, 2005; Hall, 2011; King & Bannon, 2002), and the increased importance they came to place on their academic studies (MacDonald, 2009; Reay et al., 2010). Students' changing priorities tended to have a differential impact on their sport participation. On the one hand, they tended to further decrease the likelihood that less active students would develop or revive their sports participation. On the other hand, those

students with higher levels of sporting commitment, and who were appropriately predisposed to participate, tended to be more willing and able to change aspects of their participation in response to the changing constraints they were experiencing. This was clearly illustrated by changes in the level and importance of rugby for one highly committed male sport participant at University B, which, as he noted, appeared to be closely related to the transitions he experienced since age 18:

Justin: At university now your work has to come first really, because obviously it's a lot of money. You've decided to come, so that's sort of made an influence as well ... I wouldn't miss a rugby game for anything really when I was 16, 17, 18 ... but also at uni there's more importance on how you do at your work ... I think the importance of my age and university has just sort of made rugby go down and sport go down the ladder a bit.

Despite the decline in the importance of sport in the lives of even the most committed sport participants with age, as they progressed towards their final year at university, for students like Justin these transitions did not cause his participation to lapse completely. In a not dissimilar way, a highly committed female sport participant at University A also explained that she now prioritized her university work above her sport participation and that this had reduced the number of sports in which she was able to participate, but was nevertheless able to continue participating three to four times each week on average. She said:

Leonie: Putting university work first really and other commitments, university work comes before sport 'cos at the end of the day that's my career, so I have got to put that

first ... I just haven't got enough time in the week to do all of it so I have got to drop something.

In relation to the differential influence students suggested that the (lack of) structure in their university lives had on their sport participation, it was clear that for some students a greater number of life commitments with age (e.g. work and study) and the structure that this imposed on the ways in which they spent their time (Bexley et al., 2013; Broadbridge & Swanson, 2005; Christie, 2009; Reay et al., 2010), was something that they believed assisted their current participation in fewer sports. For other students, the flexibility of university life had the opposite effect. In discussing the 'focus' that various work and study commitments gave to his participation in a more limited range of sports (e.g. football and the use of a gym), one highly active commuting male sport student at University A explained:

Paul: When I was at college I was doing more sports but at university I have been more focused on football 'cos I have matured ... coming to university and giving [*sic*] me perspective on what to do ... I had my self-employed job so I was doing three different jobs ... I was doing ten-hour shifts but I mean I was still getting the training in ... since university came it does help you focus on that one sport.

Of particular significance here, however, is that students with the broadest sporting portfolios, richest predispositions, and who were highly committed to maintaining their regular participation, were better able to respond to the constraints imposed upon them. Nevertheless, even among the more committed sports participants, the flexibility of their university lifestyle was more common among residential students, one of whom said:

Mike: As a student if you don't really have assignments you're only in two or three hours a day, so you've got most of the time during the day to do something like play sport or do whatever you want. But then I think with the student lifestyle you develop drinking habits, quite excessive drinking habits and if you're in first year you're out three times a week, so it does sort of make [*sic*] an impact, but playing football on a Wednesday you're automatically playing sport.

When asked to reflect upon the flexibility of students' lifestyles and its impact on their current sport participation, many students were of a similar opinion to Emma, a psychology student at University A, who said:

Obviously drinking, going out, has an impact that [*sic*] we don't do as much exercise if you're going out and getting drunk. Eating habits as well; if you go out eating more often, eat out in restaurants and things, you have less time, it's all the structure, you have less structure than if you were at home before uni ... you just do less really.

It might be argued, therefore, that despite the often positive impact that greater the flexibility of students' lifestyles is assumed to have on their sport participation, it seemed that this flexibility was a necessary but not a sufficient condition for sustaining participation in the face of other commitments and leisure activities that students wished to fulfil. Indeed, for some students, the flexibility of their lifestyles was perceived as an opportunity to engage more heavily in other leisure pursuits (e.g. eating out of the home and drinking), occasionally at the expense of their rather more limited sport participation which ranked lower in their order of priorities when organizing their leisure time (Furlong, 2013; West et al., 2009).

Summary

The purpose of this chapter has been to examine some key aspects of students' present-day sport participation, including the levels, frequency and kinds of sports in which they engaged, where and with whom they engaged, and for what purposes. In doing so, subject of study was found to be the strongest predictor of current and past participation, followed closely by sex. Data from the structured and semi-structured interviews also revealed that many students, regardless of subject of study and sex, tended to prefer engaging in individualized, recreational and more organizationally convenient activities, which for sports students especially were done alongside a small number of more traditional, competitive and structured team sports. Non-sports students, in particular, were much more likely to find the subcultures that surrounded university sports clubs (especially those involving teams) as generally off-putting and instead preferred to engage in more do-it-yourself styles of participation, both on and off campus, while residential students (particularly males and sport students) were disproportionately represented among users of campus-based sports facilities. Indeed, despite their relatively low cost, convenience and availability, university sports facilities appealed to and were used by a minority of students, with the gym setting being regarded as a largely male-dominated environment in which the public display and watching of fellow students' bodies (especially those of females) helped to limit significantly the participation of a majority of students. The degree to which students' sport participation could be accommodated within their other obligations, including academic and paid work commitments, and their other uses of leisure were among the other constraints on participation reported by students. To help explain students' preference for and participation in various leisure activities, the next chapter (Chapter 6) will examine the development of their leisure biographies and careers before their present-day engagement in them is considered in Chapter 7.

Chapter Six

University Students' Leisure Careers

Introduction

Having analysed students' current participation as part of their broader sport careers in the previous two chapters, this chapter explores the trajectories of students' leisure careers and participation in a range of leisure activities which come to compete for their time, money and attention. It does so because, as noted in Chapter 1, in order to adequately explain students' sport participation this needs to be located within the context of their broader leisure lifestyles so that the links between these interrelated dimensions of youth lifestyles and the implications for each can be better understood. To facilitate the analysis of students' leisure participation in this way, and for ease of presentation, students' careers in individual leisure activities are grouped into three broad categories of leisure: low cost, costly, and high culture leisure.

Students' low cost leisure careers

This section reports on students' monthly engagement with three low cost leisure activities, namely, computer gaming, reading and contemporary music. Before doing so, it is worth noting that while students' current participation in other similarly low cost and sedentary activities such as internet use and TV viewing are discussed in detail in Chapter 7, given their almost daily use by many groups in countries such as Britain (e.g. Bennett et al., 2010; Furlong, 2013; Seddon, 2011), no data were generated on students' monthly careers in these activities. Focusing on students' participation in those low cost leisure activities for which career data were generated, however, there were clear similarities in the trajectories of monthly participation in all three leisure pursuits, which developed most rapidly during the

primary, and especially secondary, school years. More specifically, for all low cost leisure activities students' involvement initially developed between 6- and 8-years-old, before becoming increasingly popular between 10- and 15-years-old. Thereafter, with the exception of a decline of approximately 15 per cent (see Figure 6.1 and 6.2) in computer game use by age 17, students' monthly engagement in low cost leisure remained relatively stable post-16-years-old.

By the end of the statutory secondary school years, it was apparent that listening to contemporary music at least monthly was an established feature of nearly all students' lives (Seddon, 2011), and, as with TV and internet use, became a universal leisure activity with few differences in participation by sex, subject of study, social class and residential status (e.g. see students' monthly engagement with contemporary music by sex, Appendix C Figure 6.1). In contrast, it was clear that the main differences in the trajectories of students' past use of computer games were observed in relation to sex and residential status. Males were more likely to have played computer games over the life course thus far, which was associated with particularly steep increases in participation between ages 10 and 15, while females' use peaked at age 11 before declining continuously thereafter (Figure 6.1). Residential students were more likely than commuting students to report playing computer games over the life course, especially between 7- and 9-years-old and when aged 11 to 17 (Figure 6.2). Sex also appeared to be associated with students' reading over the life course, with higher proportions of females across degree courses reading at all ages (particularly 10-15-years-old) (Figure 6.3).

Evidence from the semi-structured interviews suggested that in a similar manner to students' socialization into sport, females' propensity towards reading for leisure was related to their

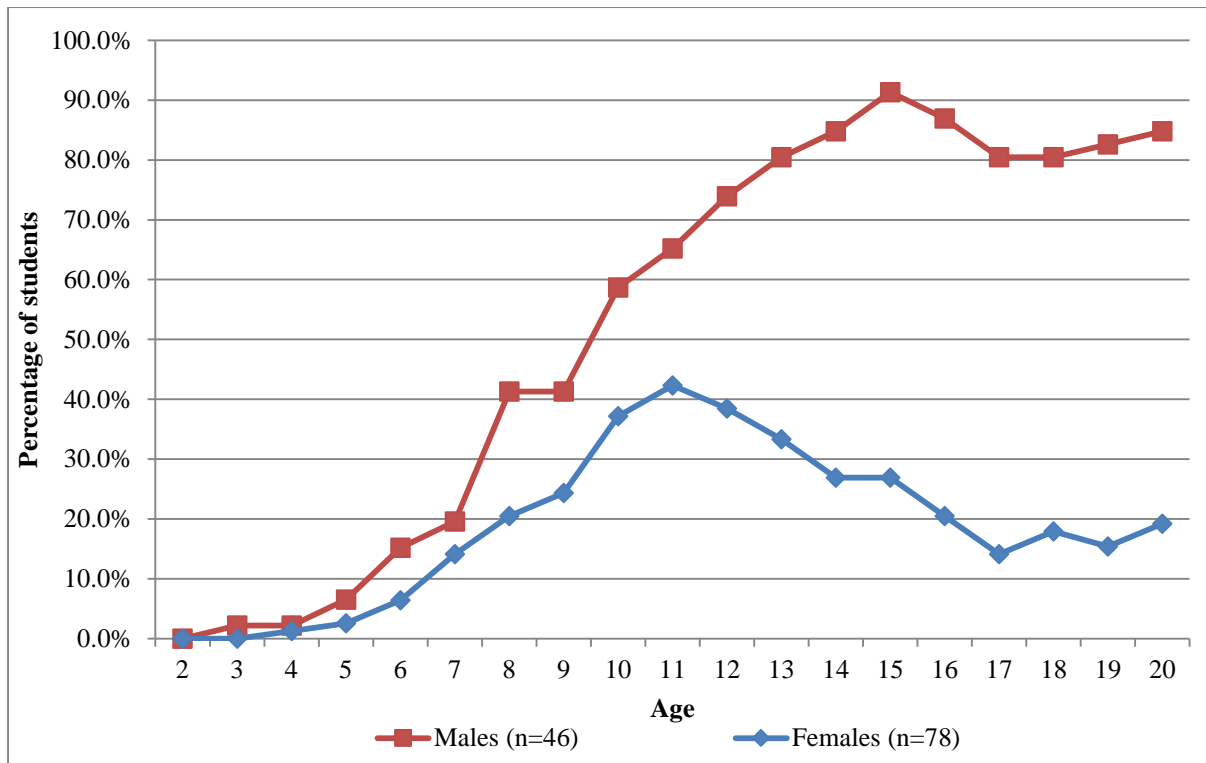


Figure 6.1 Students' use of computer games over the life course by sex

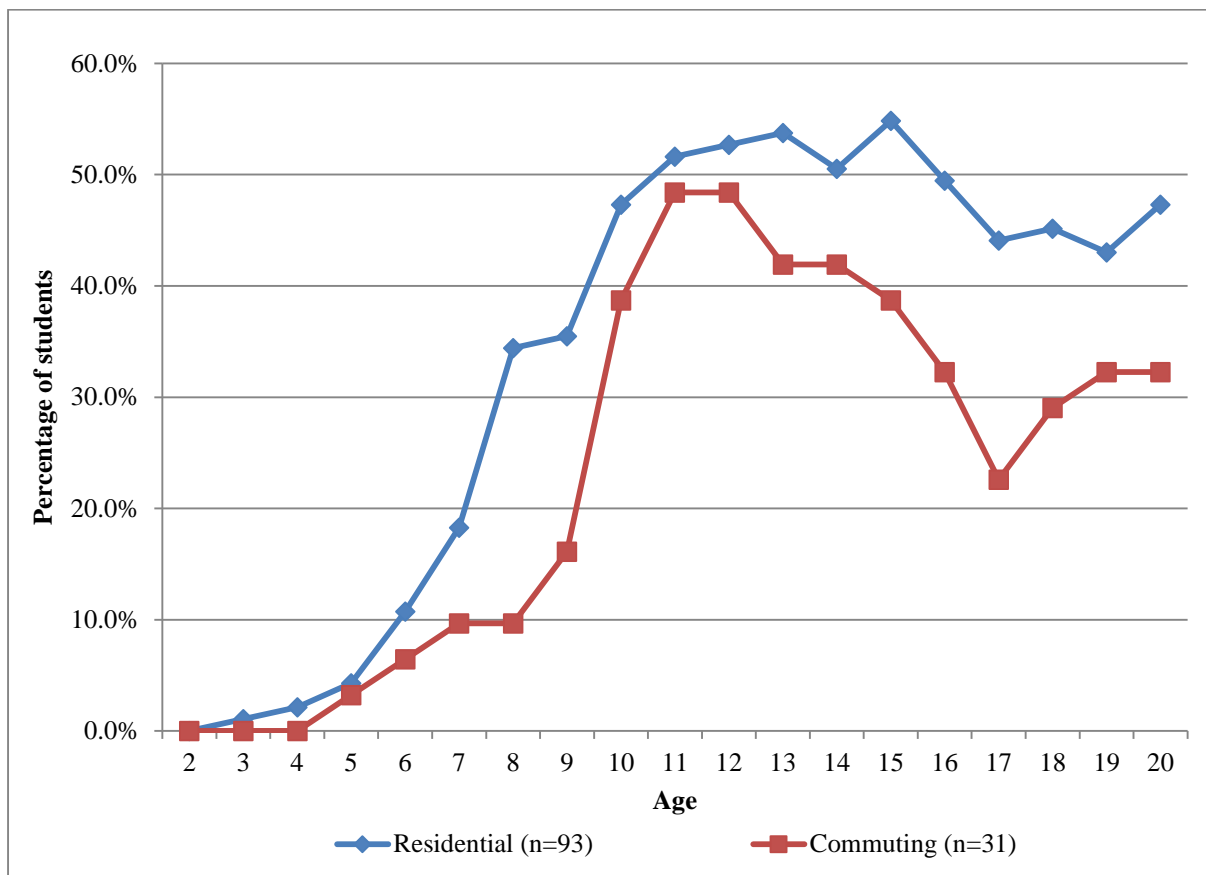


Figure 6.2 Students' use of computer games over the life course by residential status

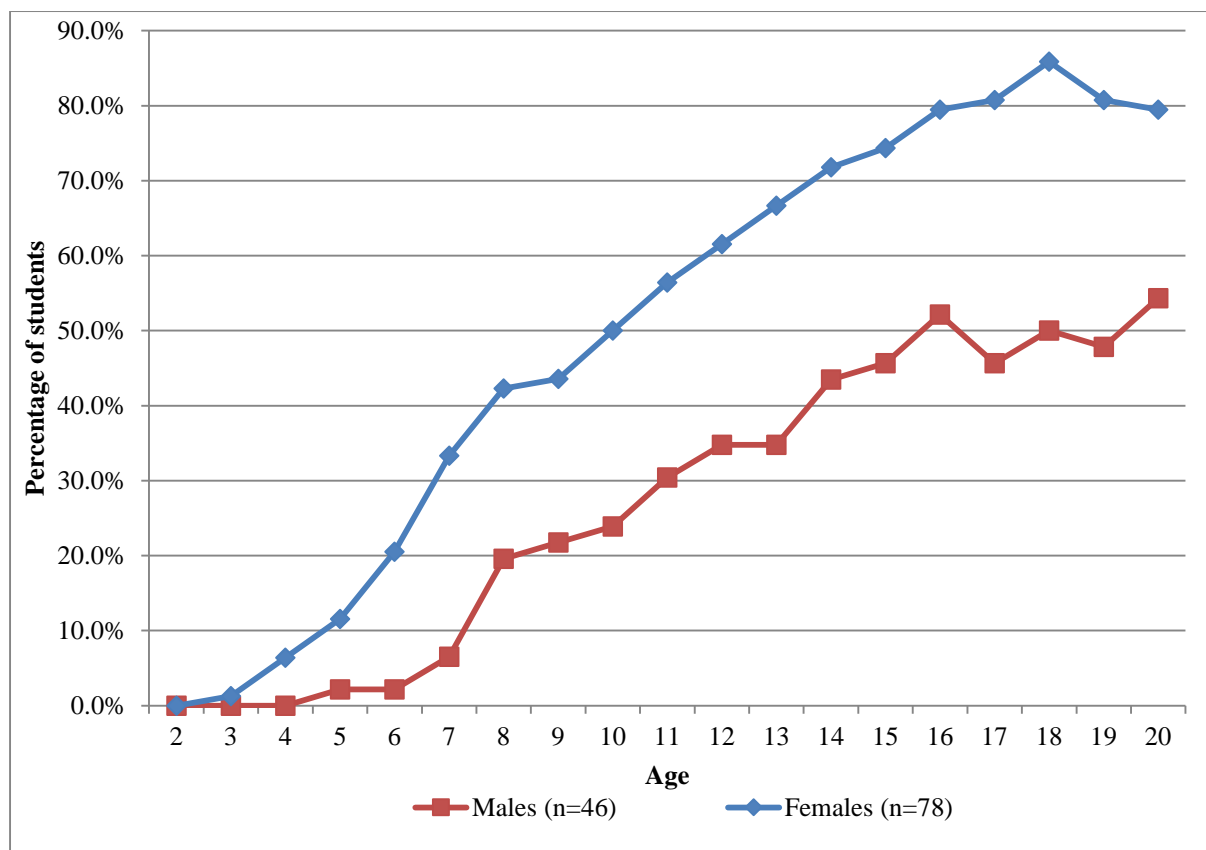


Figure 6.3 Students’ reading for leisure over the life course by sex

early childhood experiences and, in particular, the purposive investments parents made in them to encourage their engagement in reading. For example, Rosie, a psychology student at University B, explained that:

I have always really, really enjoyed reading from being at primary school and reading all the books that we read there ... I always used to waste all my money on ... the book fairs that we had at school ... We would have like books that we brought home from school that we’d have to like read, so I’d always sit there and read it with my mum and dad ... It’s just kind of been my escape in a way ... if I have had like a bad day or something, I will just go and read a book.

Other female students in the sample, including Rhianna, a psychology student at University B, similarly emphasized that reading was one important cultural dimension of family life and was encouraged by parents, especially her mother, who often took her to libraries during her leisure time:

It's something that my family have always sort of done. As a small child it was encouraged that you read ... we didn't [*sic*] really allow the tele in our room until we had one for Christmas ... My mum has always encouraged that we read ... she used to take us to the library all the time, like pick books or whatever, and I think I have just sort of carried it on.

Male interviewees were by comparison to other students less likely to report being socialized into reading by their parents when young, and when they did read this was often about sport in magazines or newspapers. Indeed, for all male interviewees, reading had to compete with other activities for their time as they progressed through the teenage years when socializing with friends and engaging in drug-oriented leisure associated with the transition to adulthood. Aaron, a business student at University A, described the process thus:

When I was younger I used to like reading a bit but I did sort of go off it. The last few years of uni I have got sort of back into reading again, whereas when I was 16, 17, 18, I just used to read magazines ... I guess that's the age I sort of started going out more and just getting involved with more stuff. Just going out socializing more. I think I just didn't find time for it. It didn't appeal to me as much then ... [I was] playing guitar more often, definitely going out more, smoking and drinking more, things like that.

The increasing appeal of commercialized leisure activities to male students as their lives unfolded during the youth life stage meant that activities such as reading were often marginalized, with activities such as sports-related gambling (Wardle et al., 2014) and playing computer games assuming a prominent place in the leisure lives of many students when young (Livingstone, 2002; Roberts, 2006; Sweeting & West, 2003). Leon, a sports student from University A, explained how gambling on football and later in casinos were among the staple diet of leisure activities he engaged in from mid-adolescence onwards:

I just started off with an accumulator on football, started off at like 50p and then it would be a £1 and then ... as I got older and got more money it started getting £2, £5, £10, £20, £50, £100, it's just escalated ... We used to go down and get a coupon and always used to have a coupon and just sit and watch Soccer Saturday all day on Saturday ... I do most of mine online 'cos I find it easier but I still go into the bookies and stuff like that if I want to, but I don't really bet much in the bookies on football ... If we go to my mate's house instead of playing computer, we will go the bookies for an hour and we will just watch the horses and have a bet on the horses ... Poker, [I] used to go like every Tuesday at the casino, they used to have a student tournament.

For Leon and other students, the time they spent growing up also involved their more or less regular participation in more costly forms of leisure, including going to the cinema, shopping and consuming alcohol. These are examined next.

Students' costly leisure careers

When examining the development of students' careers in high cost leisure activities, namely, live sporting events, shopping, cinema and alcohol consumption,¹ it was clear that the

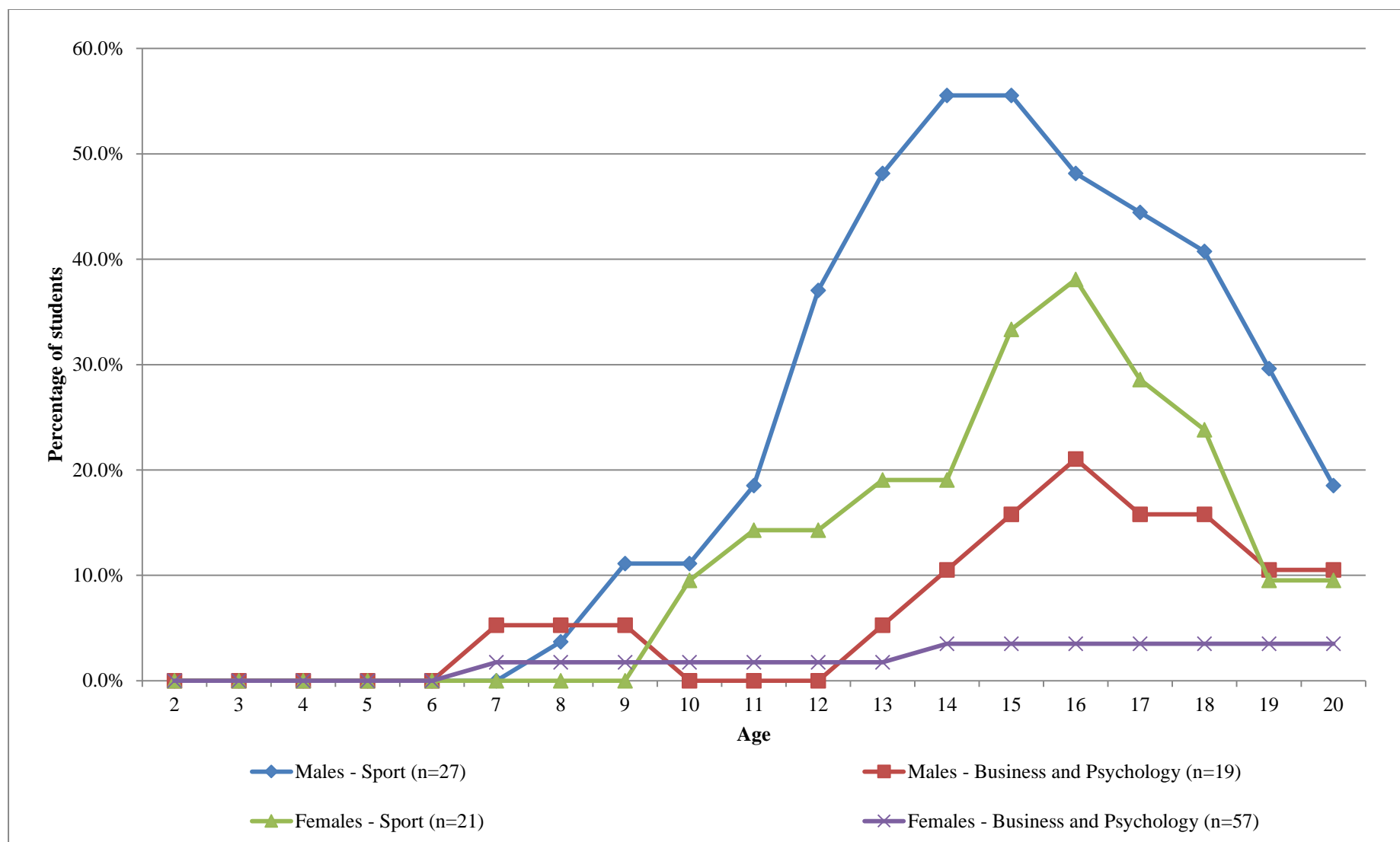


Figure 6.4 Students' attendance at live sports events over the life course by sex and subject

secondary school and college years were the critical years in which students' regular engagement in these activities developed most markedly. More specifically, however, as shown in Figure 6.4 and 6.5, students' regular attendance at live sport events and shopping for leisure were activities that tended to be adopted by an increasing number of students between 11-16-years-old, whereas attending the cinema and consuming alcohol at least monthly became increasingly popular later in secondary school and college years (14-18-years old).

As with their active participation in sport (see Chapter 4 and 5), students' regular attendance at live sport events was increasingly common among those who were studying sport degrees and who had developed a stronger commitment to this activity during late childhood and youth (Figure 6.4). During the secondary school years (11-16-years-old), when the proportion of students regularly attending live sport events rose most rapidly, the propensity for both male and female sports students to do so was far greater than students studying psychology or business. More specifically, by age 16, higher proportions of male sport students (48 per cent) were likely to regularly attend a live sport event than other males (21 per cent), and female sport students (38 per cent) were more likely to do so compared to females studying non-sport related degrees (4 per cent). In this regard, live sport events were much more likely to be a consistent feature of sport students' leisure across the life course (Figure 6.4), which meant that male sport students, in particular, could be regarded as hyper-participants in this form of leisure.

As noted earlier, although there were no notable differences in students' uses of other costly leisure by age 20, several sex-related differences were observed during the adolescent years. For example, while students tended to report similar shopping and cinema habits regardless

of the social characteristic being examined when aged 20, as shown in Figure 6.5 and 6.6, females tended to be more likely to engage in both of these activities earlier in the life course.

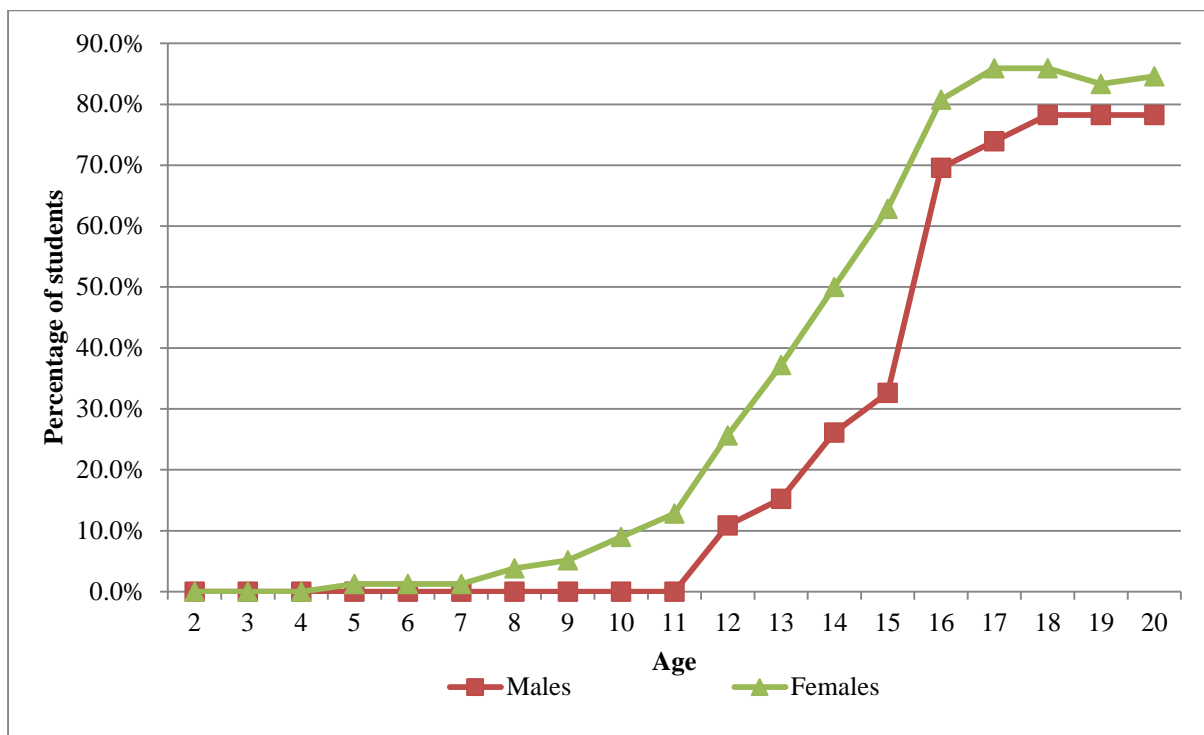


Figure 6.5 Students' shopping for leisure over the life course by sex

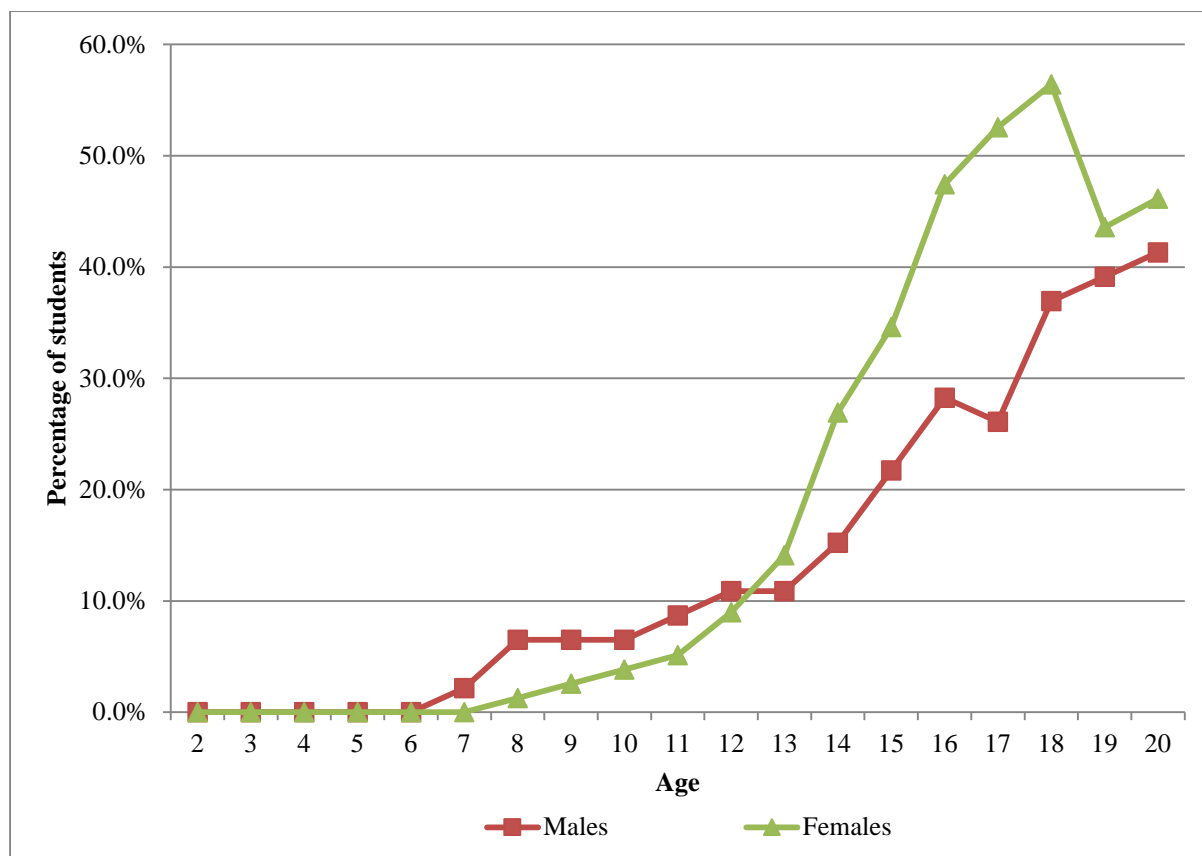


Figure 6.6 Students' cinema attendance over the life course by sex

In relation to shopping for leisure, clear sex-related differences developed between 11-15-years-old, by which time females (63 per cent) were almost twice as likely to shop at least monthly for leisure compared to males (33 per cent). Similarly, a progressive widening in sex-related differences for cinema attendance occurred between age 13 and 17, and peaked with females (53 per cent) being twice as likely as male students (26 per cent) to attend the cinema at least monthly. In both cases, these sex differences diminished almost completely in the immediate years that followed.

Finally, although there were few notable differences in students' alcohol consumption by age 20, there were some differences in the trajectories of students' alcohol careers, especially in relation to sex. Figure 6.7 indicates that while males were clearly more likely to incorporate regular alcohol consumption as part of their broader leisure lifestyles during the late

secondary school and early college years (Aldridge et al., 2011; Kelly et al., 2011; Kwan et al., 2012; Parker et al., 2002; West, 2009), observed sex differences in the regular consumption were moderated by a more pronounced rise in alcohol consumption by females at age 18. In addition, while regular alcohol consumption was more common among commuting students earlier in the life course (see Appendix C Table 6.2), a more marked rise in residential students' consumption at age 18 – when the majority of students enrolled at university – offset any earlier residential status differences in alcohol consumption. On this basis, with the exception of sports students who reported continuous increases in drinking alcohol until age 16 and remained significant drinkers of alcohol (e.g. Clayton & Harris, 2008; Dempster, 2009, 2011; Kwan et al., 2012), the transition to university was accompanied by a correlative increase in the consumption of alcohol by female and residential students.

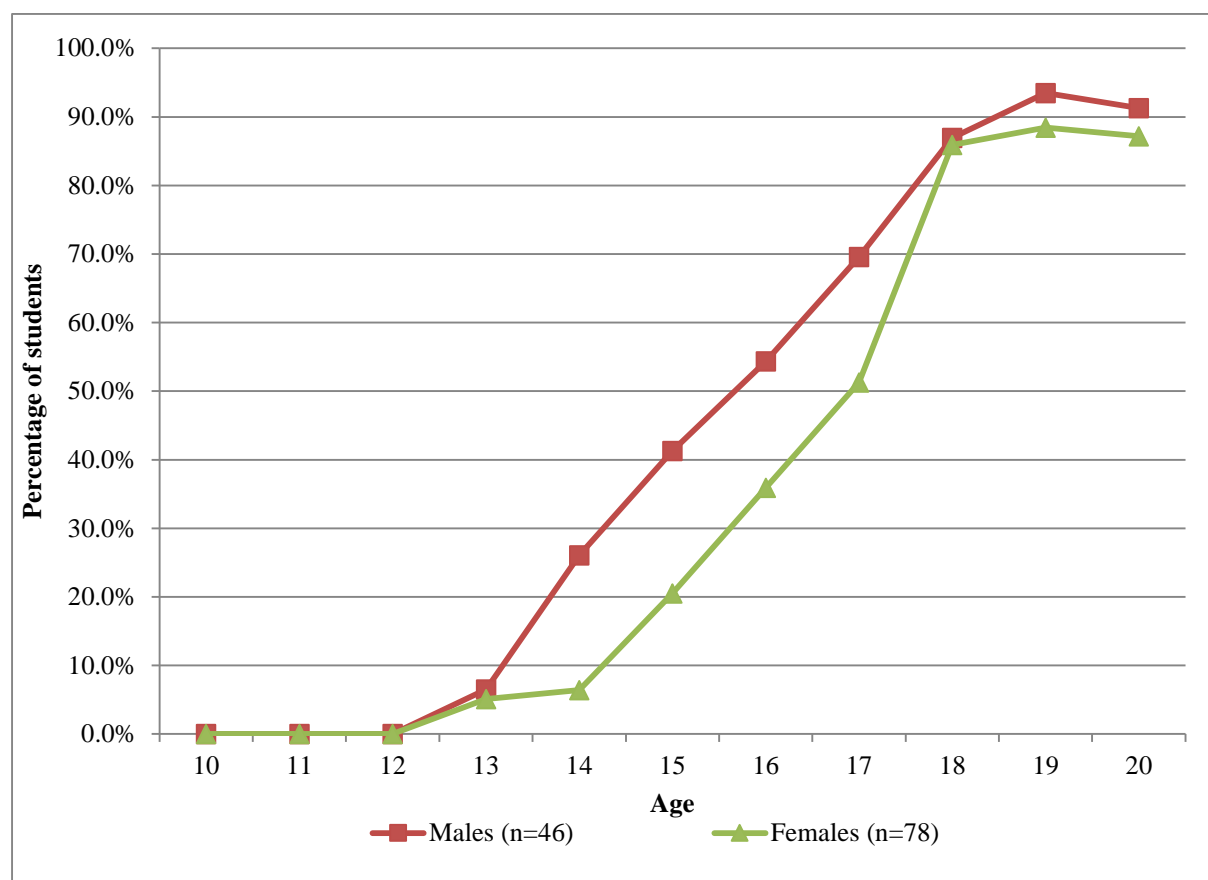


Figure 6.7 Students' monthly alcohol consumption from 10-20-years-old by sex

As noted in Chapter 1, it is common for many (though not all) young people to begin consuming alcohol in their mid-teenage years, but going to university can be a period during the course of which they become more regular drinkers and subject to the constraints of like-minded peers within their developing alcohol-oriented networks (Borsari & Carey, 2001; Clayton & Harris, 2008; Dempster, 2009, 2011; De Visser & Smith, 2007). Accordingly, for the students in the present study, as elsewhere (e.g. Borsari & Carey, 2001; Kwan et al., 2012; Terleki et al., 2014; West, 2009), the regular (and often excessive) consumption of alcohol was perceived as an unremarkable feature of their unfolding university lifestyles which took place in the context of their increasingly complex relational networks and social worlds. When asked to explain her present-day engagement in costly leisure, including drinking alcohol and going to the cinema, Leonie, a sport student at University A, explained that ‘going to the pub’ regularly with friends was more appealing than other alternatives such as reading for leisure. She said:

I’m more active. I can’t be doing with sitting around and doing nothing, I never have, so I would rather be doing something a bit more active than reading a book ... We regularly go to the pub even if we are not drinking, we just go to the pub for like a chat, or the cinema, bowling or anything like that.

As with other leisure behaviours (most notably sport) examined in the preceding chapters, many of the differences in students’ current alcohol consumption appeared to have their roots in their alcohol-oriented experiences of the transition from childhood to youth and, for some students, were traceable to their family socialization during this period (Foxcroft & Lowe, 1997; Smith & Foxcroft, 2009; Valentine et al., 2010). The significance of family life for understanding the relationship between students’ current and past alcohol-based leisure

careers was indeed a conclusion that could be drawn from the semi-structured interviews held with some students, the observations of which were consistent with the findings of other investigations in the UK (e.g. Eadie et al., 2010; Parker et al., 1998; Sherriff et al., 2008; Valentine et al., 2010) and elsewhere (e.g. Fang et al., 2009; Habib et al., 2010; Kelly et al., 2011; Mares et al., 2012). Reflecting upon his initiation into alcohol during the mid-teenage years, Justin, a sport student at University B, for example, described the influence of his mother (a single parent) and other family members on his engagement with alcohol in the following way:

My mum's never really been one to ... hide me from alcohol ... When I was 14 she was like 'Right, you're probably going to start drinking soon, so you're best off [*sic*] doing at home in a safe environment ... I'd rather you get used to it and experience it in the home'. So she'd give me a beer now and then just to let me try it ... It was partly to do with my family. I'm not saying they all drink all the time (laughs), or they're alcoholics, but you know if we have a family gathering ... I'm there 14, 15 and they'd be like more than happy like, 'Oh, you're here, you're safe, have a few drinks'.

Another psychology student at University B similarly explained that, for her parents, drinking alcohol during the early phases of the youth life-stage was not a taboo activity and instead allowed her to drink within relatively specified limits, usually in the parental home but also in a supervised capacity at their friends' homes:

Emily: My mum and dad used to let me [drink] ... not getting legless or anything, but just have like a few drinks with friends and stuff ... probably about 14, 15 ... It was quite open. We could just do it at our house; it wasn't kind of a taboo subject or

anything ... They didn't make an issue of it as long as we were sensible with it and we kind of trusted each other ... not to drink too much. Then they kind of gave us the freedom of drinking at a young age.

The parents of other interviewees were also described by their offspring as adopting a relatively relaxed, but nevertheless controlled, approach to their consumption of alcohol in sociable leisure environments where the enjoyment of alcohol was permitted with friends (Foxcroft & Lowe, 1997; Smith & Foxcroft, 2009; Valentine et al., 2010). As Aaron, a business student at University A noted, these leisure sites usually included the parental home where his consumption of alcohol became part of shared family time which he found 'enjoyable' and 'relaxed':

Aaron: Before we were allowed to drink it would be sort of parties at houses and it was just enjoyable with everybody ... As you got older it become more of a social thing ... they both drink – not heavily – but it was quite relaxed, they didn't mind me doing it.

For these and similar students, the 'sensible' drinking practices they recalled first emerging in the family home were consistent with the findings of Valentine et al.'s (2010) study in which parents who introduced their offspring to alcohol in the home did so because it was perceived to be a 'safe' environment within which to initiate children into an important part of 'growing up'. It was evident from the students' comments that the presence of alcohol in the family home and its consumption in the company of parents were not taboo subjects. Instead, for these students, the introduction to alcohol in the family home was part of a broader parental strategy which was considered to be more effective for teaching children about drinking

within safe limits, rather than adopting a strict authoritarian approach to the management of drinking practices (Habib et al., 2010; Valentine et al., 2010). Although it is difficult to conclude, like other studies have done (e.g Eadie et al., 2010; Habib et al., 2010; Kelly et al., 2011), that the availability of alcohol and its integration into family life during childhood (particularly at meal times, but also on family occasions) was associated with higher prevalence and quantity of alcohol consumption, it was clear that these settings nevertheless provided the foundations for students' longer-term alcohol-related leisure careers which, as the next chapter suggests, continued to unfold whilst at university.

For other students who participated in the semi-structured interviews, however, the family was not considered a key socializing agent for the consumption of alcohol during childhood and, in some cases, this meant that they refrained from drinking completely until the late teenage years or until they joined university. For Chris, a business student at University A, his comparatively late introduction to the consumption of alcohol in his leisure time was related to the socialization practices of his parents whom he said never drank in front of their children and nor, for that matter, did they offer him an alcoholic drink:

It was most probably the way I was brought up in all fairness. I think the majority of stuff I haven't done – for example, like take drugs, drink before 18 – it was most probably because of my upbringing. I never saw my parents ... drinking in front of me. And yeah it just didn't bother me at all ... never offered me a drink at all ... My dad never influenced my drinking at all [and] my mum, she actually does go to the gym ... she has been working out for like seven years and she just does it to keep toned ... I have been training for two years and she has been training for like seven, so I might have got it [predisposition for sport] from her unknowingly.

Parents' abstention from alcohol was also described as 'normal' by other students, including Jane, a psychology student at University A, who explained that because her parents did not drink, this meant the consumption of alcohol was neither normalized nor encouraged as part of the shared leisure experiences she had with her family during childhood. As she noted, drinking alcohol has never been 'part of her life':

'Cos my parents don't drink I think it's never been like the norm to drink all the time ... It hasn't been ... inflicted on me; it's just not been one of those things that's been like part of my life ... They have never told me not to, but they have just said that they are glad I'm responsible ... Because they had given me the freedom I didn't want to let them down, so that then they would be really cross at me and take the freedom away.

Taken together, these extracts indicate something of the ways in which some students' parents sought to model their behaviour differently to other parents, namely, by refraining from drinking alcohol openly in family settings as they were growing up. As in the present study, these strategies have been shown previously to help delay the point at which young people begin consuming alcohol, or be associated with abstaining from drinking altogether, through planned and deliberate family management (Eadie et al., 2010; Habib et al., 2010; Kelly et al., 2011). For three other interviewees who grew up living in single-parent families, it was their experience of problematic drinking by their mothers, all of whom had died from alcohol-related illnesses, which they claimed help limit the degree to which they themselves had drunk alcohol from an early age. Describing himself as not being 'a big drinker', Paul, a sport student from University, explained the negative experiences he personally had of alcohol whilst growing up as follows:

I'm not a big drinker anyway. I never have been ... When you see mates that have got to critical stages through alcohol, you have had ... family that have had trouble through alcohol and have died ... it does go into your mind a bit ... I have seen people like the older people in my family have drunk a bit and they have had a bit of trouble with it. And with mates I see a lot of friends that some have even gone into hospital and you just think 'What is the point?'

In a not dissimilar way, Rosie, a psychology student at University B, recalled her father's 'strict' approach to her own youthful consumption of alcohol as being a response to her mother's alcoholism, which ultimately led to her death, and which meant that at the time of her interview Rosie described herself as not being 'really bothered' about drinking alcohol at university:

I never really got the chance, I know quite a few of my friends used to go out and their parents would let them have a drink and stuff like that but my dad was always really strict ... It never really bothered me that he said I couldn't drink and then when I was 18. I never really drank properly anyway ... My mum drank quite heavily – she started when I was about twelve – so my dad just said you can't drink properly until you are 18 ... She was an alcoholic, so I never wanted to end up like that and it put me off drinking for ages ... I refused to drink anything thinking that it's genetic and I just kind of like refused and my friends just told me that I was an idiot, and that it wouldn't happen, and then I just started drinking a bit more.

The prevailing tendency for these two students to perceive alcohol as a taboo leisure activity that had negative consequences for family life and cohesion during their childhood

socialization was also brought out particularly clearly in an interview held with Karen, a business student at University A. In the light of her mother's problematic drinking, Karen explained that her father sought to make her aware of the dangers of the persistent and excessive consumption of alcohol during her teenage years so that by the time she reached university drinking was not a particularly prominent aspect of her leisure biography:

Alcohol was the reason why my mum died so I always saw alcohol as something ... almost evil so ... my interests in it came a lot later, 'cos when I saw what it did to my mum I was like that's not worth it ... As I got a bit more mature and could easily drink socially and not necessarily let it consume me, that was probably when I started drinking [aged] 17, 18 ... My dad just kind of taught me that to drink a bit is fine, but don't go overboard. I think that's more or less all he did ... he just kind of instilled [that] in me as I got older.

The recollections these three students offered of their family lives, in which exposure to alcohol was restricted as much as possible following the death of a parent, may question the emphasis which other authors have placed on the importance of having two (usually biological) parents in the household to impose clear family rules on the consumption of alcohol (e.g. Habib et al., 2010; Kelly et al., 2011). For the students bereaved by alcohol-related illnesses in this study, growing up in a single parent family enabled them to develop close emotional relationships with their father which, they suggested, helped them to abstain from drinking, or drink less, during childhood compared to their peers. For them, the kinds of close parental monitoring which are believed to be most common among nuclear families (e.g. Habib et al., 2010; Kelly et al., 2011) were, in fact, indicative of the intense and wide-ranging techniques their single fathers played during their adolescent years. The strategies

parents adopted towards the initiation of students into drinking alcohol were therefore complex ones, which varied by family type, and in the degree to which parents monitored their offspring's drinking, within what boundaries and for what purposes. This differentiated understanding of students' initiation into drinking alcohol, and the trajectories of their subsequent careers, is thus essential for understanding the multiple ways in which parents become significant influences on children's attitudes towards, and experience of, consuming alcohol (Valentine et al., 2010).

Students' involvement in high culture leisure

Playing a musical instrument was the only high culture leisure activity to be undertaken by a significant proportion of students, and is therefore the only activity which merits detailed analysis here. As shown by Figure 6.8, students' likely uptake of a musical instrument as an aspect of the broader leisure was somewhat sex-dependent, which sometimes coincided with students' propensity to listen to similar styles of music (Bennett, 2000, 2005; Miles, 2000). While both sexes were likely to first adopt playing an instrument during the primary school years (5-11-years-old) this was more common among female students, and in contrast, a greater proportion of males were likely to begin playing an instrument regularly in their late secondary school years (14-16-years-old). This later adoption of playing a musical instrument among male students, in combination with a steep decline in female students' playing post-16-years-old, meant that males, particularly those studying business or psychology, were most likely to still be playing at age 20. Furthermore, notwithstanding that being male was the most powerful predictor of students' propensity to play a musical instrument post-16-years-old, other important predictors of students' likelihood of playing a musical instrument at this later stage of the life course included studying for a non-sport related degree and being middle-class (Bennett et al., 2010; Widdop et al., 2014). More specifically, from age 14, male

and female students studying business or psychology were clearly more likely to have developed cultural tastes for playing a musical instrument than their same-sex peers. Similarly, middle-class students were more likely than their more working-class peers to regularly play a musical instrument from age 15 (Figure 6.9), and to accommodate this within their cultural repertoires as their leisure careers unfolded (Bennett et al., 2010).

It was noted earlier that very few students reported regularly listening to classical music and attending art galleries or museums; however, as other studies of cultural participation have observed (Bennett et al., 2010), those who did listen regularly to classical music and attend art galleries or museums were typically from the higher sections of the middle class, and were more likely to do so from age 17. These students were also more likely to play a musical instrument and could be distinguished from other students by their tastes and practices for these high culture activities. For example, one of the few interviewees who engaged in high culture leisure, Karen, a business student at University A, reflected on her developing interest in classical music during the later secondary school years in the following way:

I had about two or three friends and we all played similar kinds of instruments ... I started listening to more instrumental music from films and then because I played classical guitar – I started at 16 – I played more classical pieces on that so that made me get interested in more real classical music ... When I was 18 I was finishing my A-levels I found that classical music really helped me concentrate when I was revising ... I think I'd always liked it but like to admit something like that when you're in high school is like committing ... social suicide by doing that ... I would be like 'This is so uncool', but deep down 'This is quite nice'.

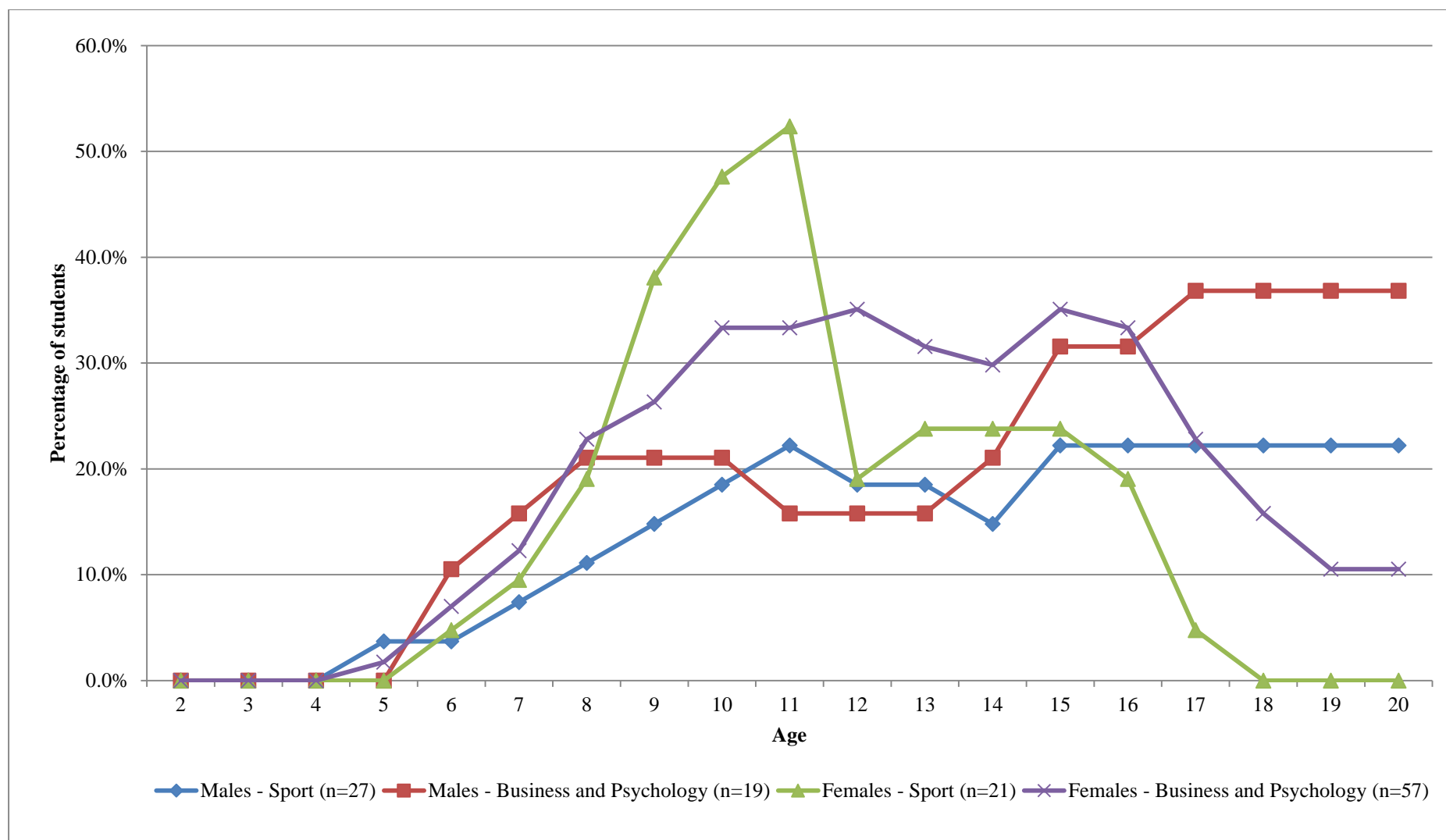


Figure 6.8 Students playing a musical instrument over the life course by subject of study and sex

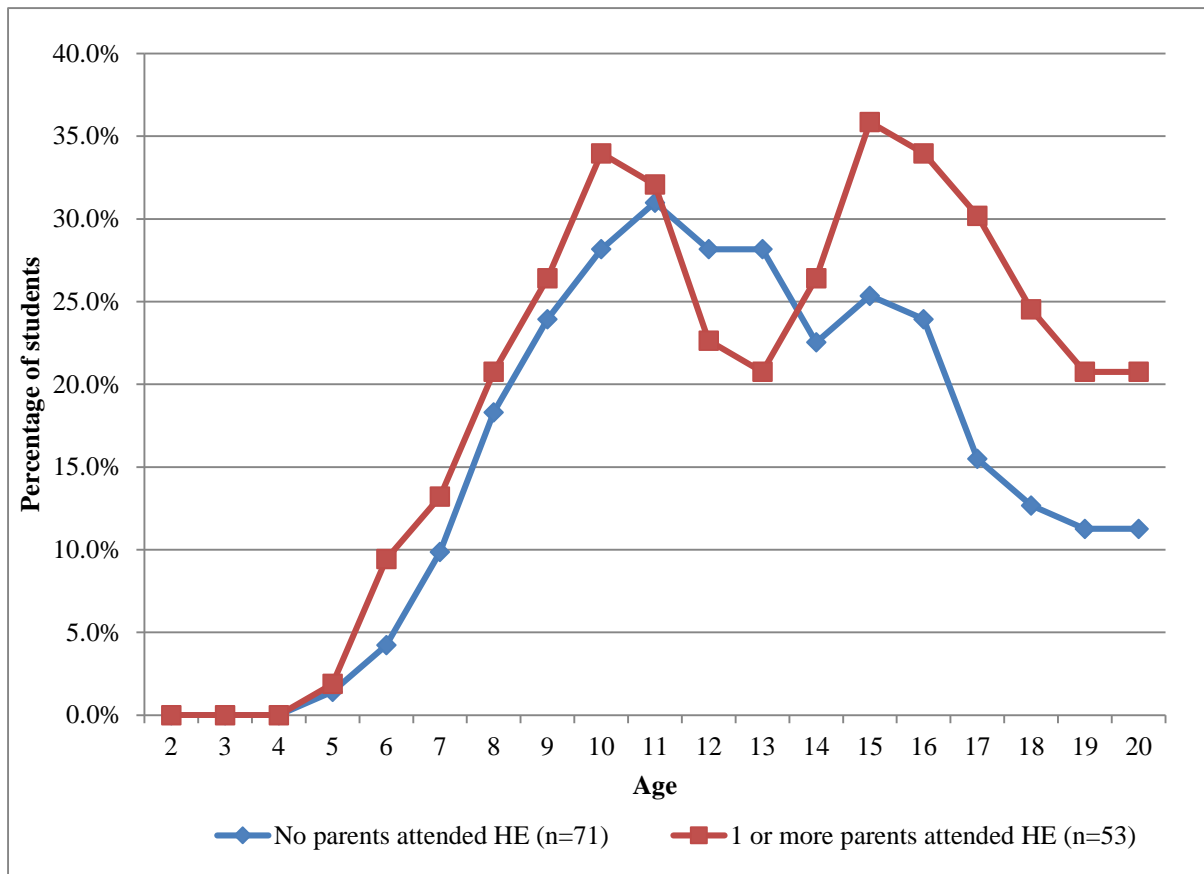


Figure 6.9 Students playing a musical instrument over the life course by social class

The development of cultural tastes for classical music, which were often passed down from parents, was also described by other students whose habituses and preferences for highbrow activities could be traced back to their teenage years. The following extract taken from an interview held with Ann, a psychology student at University A, was indicative of the comments made by the minority of students whose leisure interests were more narrowly focused around classical music and other arts-based activities:

I started listening to it when I went to college, I would wake up half seven every morning and I would always put it on. I guess I thought it relaxed my mind, it's something that's quite peaceful, rather than having to have rock or pop or something upbeat whereas that is quite relaxing and it calms your nerves down and it gets a good

start to the day and I still listen to it now, especially ... I have got some great mixes of classical music.

The initial enthusiasm and introduction to high culture leisure activities such as listening to classical music was the product of family-based socialization, particularly by students' mothers, one of whom was described by Jane, a psychology student at University A, who commented upon the influence of her mother in relation to classical music thus:

'Cos my mum has always been quite musical I just sort of decided to start playing the flute and then I just kept that up ... practising at home ... My mum has always been into like classical stuff so I have always ... chose to listen to it ... I don't mind it, so I have always kind of liked that kind of music in a way.

For a minority of students in the study, then, engagement in established and traditional cultural practices such as listening to classical music were identifiable features of the socialization practices to which they were subject with family members, most notably parents and especially mothers (Bennett et al., 2010). Since the data presented here on participation in high culture are limited, it is difficult to draw firm conclusions about the development of this dimension of students' habituses during childhood and their implications for subsequent leisure careers. It might be tentatively hypothesized, however, that for these students there may have been 'a cultural separation between what we might see as traditional from more contemporary cultural forms ... in the field of music' (Bennett et al., 2010: 49) which separated them from students who had developed less distinct, but perhaps broader, cultural repertoires (which included sport alongside other leisure pursuits) during childhood and the teenage years. In addition, it was clear that the investments parents made in their propensity

for liking classical music helped develop particular forms of cultural capital that were subsequently converted, and ultimately expressed in various ways, through students' present-day participation (Bennett et al., 2010). This is a theme that shall be returned to in Chapter 7.

Summary

The purpose of this chapter has been to examine students' engagement in three broad clusters of leisure activities throughout the life course which, as explained more fully in Chapter 8, came to compete for students' time, money and attention as they made the transition from childhood to youth. Not surprisingly, the majority of students reported engaging in a variety of low cost leisure activities, albeit often in socially patterned ways. Males, for example, were more likely to participate in pursuits such as computer games and gambling (often in relation to sport), while females were more likely to read for leisure, and residential students were more likely than their commuting peers to report playing computer games over the life course. In contrast, a significant minority of students were committed consumers of established high culture activities such as playing a musical instrument and listening to classical music, which typically differentiated them from the majority of students who had never developed tastes or preferences for these activities during the childhood life-stage. Many more students did, however, report participating in costly leisure activities including going to the cinema and shopping with friends, which were typically taken up in the early teenage years, while watching live sport was most widely undertaken by sports students (especially males) and often in conjunction with their developing interest in sport generally. The consumption of alcohol for some students first started in the family home in the early teenage years before they became more established consumers by their mid-teens, while for others their initiation into drinking alcohol developed later and was associated with the closer familial regulation of home drinking they experienced. The ways in which the trajectories of

students' engagement in these activities informed their present-day consumption of leisure is examined in the next chapter.

Notes

¹ Given their nature, cost and students' marginal monthly attendance at them, the extent to which meaningful analyses could be conducted on their careers in music events and festivals was limited and shall not be examined here. Students' present-day participation in these leisure activities will, however, be examined in Chapter 7.

Chapter Seven

University Students' Current Leisure Participation

Introduction

Having examined the development of students' leisure careers in the previous chapter, this chapter examines some other key aspects of their present-day involvement in the three previously identified typologies of leisure activities: low cost, costly, and high culture leisure. In particular, this chapter will: (i) analyse students' present-day participation in each of the three typologies of leisure; and (ii) where possible draw upon the qualitative semi-structured interview data to help explain students' experiences of low cost, costly, and high culture leisure. Before doing so however, it is worth briefly considering students' involvement in two near universal every day leisure activities: internet use and TV viewing.

Students' weekly internet and TV use

Data from the structured interviews indicated that TV viewing and internet use were established features of students' leisure lifestyles. Indeed, approximately nine-in-ten students reported watching at least one hour of TV on either a week (83 per cent males; 91 per cent females) or weekend day (91 per cent males; females, 82 per cent), while approximately one-third (33 per cent males; 31 per cent females) of students watched four or more hours on an average week day, compared to around two-fifths (males, 41 per cent; females, 37 per cent) on either a Saturday or Sunday. Reflecting the increasingly popular use of the internet generally (Feinstein et al., 2006; Furlong, 2013; Mintel, 2013; West et al., 2009), activities that were undertaken by at least two-thirds of students at least weekly, included: social networking (98 per cent); e-mail (78 per cent); news sites, including those dedicated to sports news (76 per cent); watching TV (73 per cent); listening to music/radio and shopping (69 per

cent); and free downloading of music, videos or pictures (68 per cent). Although higher proportions of males reported using the internet for gambling and viewing pornographic material, no other consistent differences were found in students' internet and TV use.

The ways in which students spent their time using the internet was also a common theme of the responses they gave in the semi-structured interviews, particularly in relation to the use of social media such as Facebook and Twitter (Intel, 2013; West et al., 2009). Indeed, there was a universal acceptance amongst students that the regular use of Facebook enabled them to remain in contact with friends, especially from where they lived before going to university, as well as family and friends who lived overseas. For example, Rosie, who at the time of interview studied psychology at University B, explained that Facebook enabled her to:

Keep in touch with people at home and ... I have quite a few relatives that live abroad, so it's nice to be able to keep in touch with them and not have to pay for phone bills to Australia and things like that ... It is the social side of it as well; being able to talk to people that you have not talked to forever. If they have gone to a different university or something like that you kind of stay in contact with them ... I have relatives in Australia and some in like America and Italy, so it's easier to get in contact with them over Facebook.

The ability of social media sites like Facebook to enable students to 'stay in touch' (Intel, 2013; West et al., 2009) with other people was also a theme evident in the comments of other students, including Natalie, also a psychology student at University B, who said that Facebook enabled her:

To stay in touch with people that you can't necessarily text or see for other reasons. Keeping up-to-date with what people are up to. I have got friends on there for instance that I made when I was in Germany, who all live in different countries, people who live in Germany, people that live in Norway, Poland stuff like that and it's not that cheap to text those places ... Facebook gives people the opportunity to do that so I think that's quite good. I find it quite good to keep in contact with my sister 'cos she has only got a mobile phone so I keep in contact with her via Facebook. And it's quite nice to be able to see what people are doing in their lives and how they are getting on.

For other students, Facebook represented an important means by which they were able to engage in the lives of others, often through photographs posted to the site, but also through the chat function that enabled them to communicate instantly with peers. In this regard, Karen, a business student at University A, spoke of the benefits to her of Facebook as follows:

When people like post things I'm just interested to see what people say ... it's just a really good way to just keep in contact with people and it's free. I just like it for the communication aspect of it ... I speak to a lot of my friends on chat some more than others, but I use that quite frequently particularly with people that are in other countries ... I would miss the photos just because I really like photographs and I like looking at other people's.

Posting photographs for others to observe also had additional functions for students, including to promote personal businesses, to convey a particular desired image of oneself, and to project one's preferred identity to others (Livingstone, 2002; West et al., 2009). When

asked about the use of Facebook to promote his personal training business and to post pictures of himself to support his work as a model, Paul, who studied sport at University A, replied:

Facebook ... helps me keep in touch with people that I wouldn't be able to keep in touch with without that. It also helps to promote my work. So I will put my modelling pictures on for example; it helps to get people who are photographers ... it helps to get me the work ... If there's clients which I have had before, if there are people look at it and think I want personal training and think I want a session, they will look at it and will get in touch through there. So it is kind of like a work matter to me as well as fun.

For the students in this study, then, one outcome of the relational constraints they experienced when seeking to accommodate social media into their daily lives was the pressure they felt to remain up to date with social happenings in friendship and family circles, and to use sites such as Facebook for self-presentational purposes (Intel, 2013; West et al., 2009). Indeed, students frequently used social media such as Facebook as a means of managing their unavoidable interdependence with others and to manage their felt need to remain in contact and interact with friends who also used the site (Intel, 2013; West et al., 2009). The habitual usage of popular media-oriented technologies such as Facebook and Twitter thus often occurred for students 'under the pressure of their entangled interdependence' (Elias, 1978: 25) with others whom they may or may not know, but with whom they comprised complex, and highly differentiated, networks of interdependence whilst at university (Dunning & Hughes, 2013; Elias, 1978).

In addition to social media, another popular use of the internet was to watch on-demand TV

programmes that can be integrated into students' leisure time (especially females), whether alone or in the company of their peers. The benefits of digital media for organizing students' privatized leisure in the home was recalled by Hannah, a business student at University B, who explained:

Because of the internet I don't watch tele at all during the day; I only watch it at night or I watch it in the morning to catch up on something that was either too late to watch or something like that ... I watch the Apprentice with my friends yeah ... if we have missed it or I didn't know it was on and then someone else mentioned it ... we would watch it or like a film.

The introduction of satellite television services and recording functions such as Sky+, in particular, was also cited by students as enabling them to engage in privatized home-centred leisure activities such as TV viewing when most organizationally convenient for them (Bennett et al., 2010; Livingstone, 2002). Commenting on the benefits of these technological innovations for the ways in which she spent part of her leisure time, Pam, a psychology at University A, said:

It's [Sky+] good for me 'cos things I want to watch every day are on when I'm still at work or I'm on my way back ... and I can just Sky+ them and then when I get home and I have cooked my tea everything I can watch it then. Home and Away is on when I'm coming back from work, and then Hollyoaks is on after that ... I could just catch Hollyoaks as I got in but I wouldn't want to run in the house type of thing [and] sit down and watch it; I want to watch it when I want to sit down and watch the tele.

It was also clear that non-internet-based TV viewing provided an opportunity for students to engage in sedentary socializing leisure with housemates, which is a common leisure activity among other social groups (Biddle et al., 2004; Feinstein et al., 2006; Marshall et al., 2002). When asked to describe how TV was accommodated within the collective leisure experience of her housemates, Cathy, a business student at University B, for example recalled:

Like last night ... there was only a few of us in the house ... everyone had a shower and everyone just came into the living room in their pyjamas. We stuck on a film; we are eating cheesecake, having a glass of wine, and just like having a bit of a chat.

The camaraderie students recalled being engendered by dedicated communal TV viewing led Gaz, another business student who studied at University B, to describe how he perceived his friends to be a 'small tribe' given the significant proportion of time they spent socializing together, including when watching TV at home. He said:

You almost become a small tribe if you live in a house with more than one person. You do the same things together; you tend to eat at the same time, or you watch the same programmes. You almost become borderline family kind of thing, because you do go out and go to the town during the day, go out all together at night.

For other students, the communal viewing of TV was also combined with other more individualized activities such as reading, as the following extract taken from an interview held with Rosie, a psychology student at University B, illustrates:

We live in a house where we normally just sit and chill in the front room, like on the couches and stuff and maybe have the TV on in the background ... just sit and have a chat or watch something on TV ... We can all just sit in the front room and even though we are not talking we are all sat there reading, so it's still kind of a social thing because we are all sat there together.

It was clear from the comments of all interviewees that they often sought to incorporate media such as on-demand TV into their peer-oriented networks in a variety of ways (Livingstone, 2002; Roberts, 2004), often for the purpose of communal consumption, and when most organizationally convenient for them. Although this was also undertaken individually, much of the appeal of viewing on-demand TV among residential students, in particular, was their ability to facilitate more face-to-face encounters with friends whilst doing so. In addition to its social appeal, students also regarded TV viewing as a form of low cost leisure that complemented other communal and relatively cheap leisure activities, which were similarly undertaken in the company of like-minded friends. Some of these activities are considered next.

Students' current participation in low cost leisure activities

Students' present-day involvement in low cost leisure incorporated the following activities: computer gaming, reading and listening to contemporary music for leisure, which had often been undertaken before students had started university. The majority of students listened to contemporary music on a daily basis (Bennett et al., 2010; Furlong, 2013; Seddon, 2011); indeed, approximately 70 per cent reported listening to contemporary music on average at least 5 days each week in the last 12 months, while reading books or magazines on a weekly basis was reported by nearly half of students (46 per cent males; 48 per cent females). Over

one-third of the sample also played computer games at least weekly, but one-in-five students reported having not played computer games in the last 12 months (Table 7.1).

Table 7.1 Frequency of students' computer game use by sex and residential status (n and %)

Frequency of participation	Overall (n=124)	Males (n=46)	Females (n=78)	Residential (n=93)	Commuting (n=31)
No participation last 12 months	26 (21.0)	4 (8.7)	22 (28.2)	17 (18.3)	9 (29.0)
Less than monthly participation	38 (30.6)	3 (6.5)	35 (44.9)	26 (28.0)	12 (38.7)
At least monthly	60 (48.4)	39 (84.8)	21 (26.9)	50 (53.8)	10 (32.3)
At least weekly	47 (37.9)	36 (78.3)	11 (14.1)	40 (43.0)	7 (22.6)

As in other studies (Biddle et al., 2004; Feinstein et al., 2006; Marshall et al., 2002), sex was a key discriminator of students' present-day computer game use which extended the sex-related differences observed in the development of students' leisure careers. Male students continued to be more regular users of computer games; indeed, they were more than three times as likely to play computer games at least monthly and approximately eight-in-ten did so at least weekly compared to less than 15 per cent of female students. The frequency of males' use of computer games was also associated with their residential status: approximately one-third of commuting students played computer games at least monthly compared to over one-half of residential students, while residential students were almost twice as likely to have played weekly in the last 12 months. Although the communal living among residential students appeared to strengthen their post-secondary school use of computer games, as it did with other uses of leisure such as TV viewing, their propensity to do so was well established by around age 16 – that is to say, before students enrolled at university – and was grounded in

their unfolding leisure lives during the primary and secondary school years (Biddle et al., 2004; Fisher, 2002; Marshall et al., 2002). Thus, long before they began studying at university, students were already engaging with new technologies – whether alone or in peer-oriented settings – which remain incorporated in the repertoire of leisure activities in which they engaged at university.

When asked about the appeal of engaging in sedentary socializing leisure activities such as playing computer games and listening to music, considerations of cost were particularly prominent in the comments of students who participated in the semi-structured interviews. This was unsurprising given the varied and often significant financial constraints to which students are currently exposed (Furlong & Cartmel, 2009; Reay, 2001; Reay et al., 2010; UUK, 2014). As Jane, a psychology student at University A, indicated quite clearly, the financial constraints of being at university limited the degree to which students were able to spend their leisure. Accordingly, many of them spent their time with friends involved in relatively cheap leisure activities, which included:

Just talking, messing around really, just not doing anything. Talk, eat, mess around and watch DVDs stuff like that ... 'Cos you don't have money as much [*sic*], I think it [how you spend your leisure time] probably isn't as flexible ... we'd do stuff more I suppose now and at uni you're a bit like 'Nah, I don't have money for that so let's just sit around and do something cheap, let's just not do anything'.

A similar view was expressed by another student who explained that playing computer games was a cost-effective form of leisure that helped counter the boredom that characterized their

lives, especially when spending time in the home. As Gaz, a business student at University A, put it:

My housemates, they all play computer games. You try and chill out with them and you just do it and you end up really enjoying it ... I think 50 per cent of social time at university is chilling out, sitting in your room with your mates that's a lot of social time now ... In terms of cost and boredom, computer games are good for just solving a bit of boredom every now and then.

For males who played computer games, sport-related games were especially popular, and many expressed the same view as Jon, a sport student at University A, who described his computer game use thus:

I only really play Football Manager ... I go round his [friend] a lot and they love Football Manager and they just play it all day and we just sit in the living room and play that ... It's more of a social thing rather than just sitting on my own and playing it; I don't want to sit on my own playing it ... I play PS2 quite a lot, Pro-Evo 4 'cos that's an incredible game, and Time Crisis but very rarely ... they are just to challenge a mate or something as a bit of fun.

As Jon's comments indicate, the appeal of relatively cheap forms of home-based leisure such as computer games lay not just in their cost (though this was important), but equally significant was the degree to which these leisure pursuits could be undertaken in the company of peers (Livingstone, 2002; Marshall et al., 2002). For example, Barry, also a sport student

at University B, emphasized the peer-oriented emphasis of playing computer games as follows:

Everyone else ... was pursuing that kind of activity [computer games] in their free time so it made you kind of wanna kind of join in ... X-box live ... you can play with your mates even if they're not in the same house and stuff like that ... FIFA, or shooting games like Call of Duty ... I wouldn't play games on my own kind of thing ... In the evening you'd have like probably three or four people playing in the house or over the internet.

While male students were more likely to report playing computer games, often with a sport or combat orientation, it was not uncommon for female interviewees to recall using exercise-related games (such as Wii-Fit) and, to an extent, other consoles (e.g. X-box), as a means of 'filling time' and socializing with housemates. One business student at University B – Cathy – recalled her experiences in the following way, which were supported by advances in software technology and the internet:

There is [*sic*]so many of us in our house it's hard to get everyone together so we have got a Wii and X-box and now we have got the X-box connect ... and a Play Station in our living room. So it gets everyone together when we are having like a Mario-Cart tournament or whatever. It's more of a chill out and it doesn't cost you 'owt ... I have sat and played the Wii by myself, but I think it is more of a laugh when you have got like stupid tournaments going and you are all screaming at the TV rather than you are sat there by yourself.

Another female psychology student at University B also recalled the ways in which using Wii technology, as an active form of socializing, was often embedded into their leisure lifestyles and especially alongside other leisure activities such as eating and drinking:

Emily: I find the Wii a lot more fun than just sitting down on the Play Station ... it was something a lot of people can do 'cos three four of us we could all get involved, whereas with a Play Station or something, it's just sat down and it's only like two of you can play or whatever ... It's active and like it's interactive and you feel like you are doing stuff with your friends like everybody can get involved ... It is a really cheap night obviously everybody comes round then all you have got to do is drinks and food, so we always used to find at the end of month when you run out of money it was just really good fun so everyone would come round.

As noted earlier, reading was another form of low cost leisure reported by students (Seddon, 2011), though as with playing computer games, this was often a gendered activity with females being more likely to report reading books than males (Furlong, 2013; Hendry et al., 1993). Reflecting upon the ways in which they incorporated reading into their lives, two female students (studying business and sport, respectively) from University A said:

Hannah: I just read every night now before going to bed, I can't sleep unless I read so it's just one of those that developed and stuck I guess. And there is always a new book out so it's not like I will run out of books and I will run out of new authors and stuff ... I guess the individuality, because not everyone reads the same books so like you would be into a genre of books that are completely different to someone else and it's your individual or what you like.

Lisa: I've just been reading *The Chronicles of Narnia*, and those kinds of books like fantasy sort of things, something that's obviously not realistic, because that sort of helps me just forget about things ... things like *Harry Potter* ... it just gets your sort of imagination going and that helps me forget and de-stress sort of thing.

As in earlier periods of their lives, males who read during their leisure time were most likely to report reading sports and fitness-oriented magazines and newspapers, rather than books, as the following extract taken from an interview held with Kai, a psychology student at University A, illustrates:

A lot of my reading is reports on football and stuff ... that's a lot of my reading ... Then obviously every day I read the papers online; I go through the papers and check the news. That is mainly the reading, it's not really book-based; I wouldn't say I go out and buy a novel or anything like. It is articles around football and stuff like that.

Similarly, Paul, a sport student at University A, also noted how his reading focused on specific magazines, when he said:

Most of the magazines to be fair are fitness magazines. With my personal training it gives me ideas what ... professional sports people what they do. So if I can just steel one or two bits from them and put it into my own, it helps improve my performance as their personal trainer ... they come up with different training methods which I use myself for my fitness and different diets.

The cultural tastes students recalled in this regard were similar to the broader patterns of cultural consumption of, and participation in, reading among the British population which have been reported by Bennett et al. (2010). In particular, it was clear that male students, like their older peers, were more likely to report tastes for 'technical forms of reading' (Bennett et al. 2010, p. 105) in which the consumption of sports and fitness magazines and books, for example, formed part of the more instrumental approach many (though not all) males tend to adopt ahead of reading for pleasure (Bennett et al., 2010). Among the female students who reported reading in their leisure time, fantasy books including *Harry Potter* were more obvious features of their cultural consumption than those reported by male students, which in the absence of more detailed data on students' reading patterns might 'be indicative of the existence of gendered forms of cultural capital' (Bennett et al., 2010, p. 105) in this leisure category. This was further reinforced in relation to the reading of newspapers (online) or news-related websites (e.g. BBC Sport, Sky Sports), which were more likely to be reported by men for the purposes of consuming sports-related news stories on a daily basis. Thus, while female students were more likely to provide 'a sense of the distinctiveness of reading as a leisure pursuit' (Bennett et al., 2010, p. 106) in their semi-structured interviews, males' comments indicated that 'reading newspapers and magazines is far more integrated into the everyday' (Bennett et al., 2010, p. 106) practices they adopted. Although males spoke of sport when recalling their reading of newspapers and magazines, alternative genres may also fall into this pursuit for other men, with the effect that their consumption 'either structures the day in various ways or provides practical and personal means of instruction and information, which respondents can use in various forms of identity-work or in their activities in other fields' (Bennett et al., 2010, p. 106).

Despite the appeal of engaging in low cost leisure activities such as playing computer games and reading, this did not prevent students pursuing more expensive forms of leisure when they had the opportunity to do. The next section explores some of the costly leisure activities reported by students, before the chapter concludes by reflecting briefly upon the engagement of a minority of students in high culture leisure activities.

Students' current participation in costly leisure activities

Students were also asked about their present-day participation in various costly leisure activities, which encompassed: attending music events or festivals; live sport events; the cinema; shopping for leisure and drinking alcohol. Attending a music event or festival was rare, with fewer than one-in-ten students doing so at least monthly, while just under one-fifth of students attended a live sport event this frequently. Going to the cinema was more popular by comparison, with approximately three-fifths of students doing so at least monthly.

Participation in these leisure activities, as with sport participation, was closely associated with sex and subject of study. Being male and studying sport, for example, were the clearest predictors of attendance at live sport events (Table 7.2): approximately one-third of males had attended a live sporting event monthly in the last year compared to less than one-in-ten females, while nearly four times as many sport students (31 per cent) had done so compared to those studying business and psychology (8 per cent). Indeed, students who attended live sport events most regularly were males studying sport, with over two-fifths of male sport students attending a live sport event at least monthly compared to just over 15 per cent of males studying non-sport courses.

Those students who attended music-oriented leisure events often did so as part of their more general engagement in the commercial leisure scene and night time economy, which incorporated live comedy and acoustic evenings at local bars and nightclubs. For example, Rhianna, a psychology student at University B, stated:

I quite like spending a lot of time at live acoustic nights, music, live comedy at (name of comedy club) and student comedy night ... I have got a job, which I do as little or as much as I want; it's quite flexible. I produce a pantomime and do a bit of tech for drama ... I think it's just the social element. I think I'm quite a social being ... I would rather be sat with three other people doing nothing and just talking crap about whatever is happening.

For other students, like Leonie, who studied sport at University A, their engagement with music-oriented leisure revolved primarily around more commercially organized events, including live concerts by high profile artists such as Rhianna and Take That:

I like my concerts, [I have] got a fair few lined up for this summer ... Friends from school who I have kept in touch with who are quite music-orientated they like their music, cricket mates, depends whoever likes that band really, like I get the tickets and then whoever likes the same bands as me they come along ... I like all sorts of music, Rhianna, Take That, One Extra stuff. I went to Radio One Xtra last year, all sorts.

Table 7.2 Frequency of students' attendance at a live sporting event by subject and sex (n and %)

Frequency of participation	Sport			Business and psychology		
	Overall (n=48)	Males (n=27)	Females (n=21)	Overall (n=76)	Males (n=19)	Females (n=57)
No participation last 12 months	9 (18.8)	3 (11.1)	6 (28.6)	40 (52.6)	4 (21.1)	36 (63.2)
Less than monthly participation	24 (50.0)	12 (44.4)	12 (57.1)	30 (39.5)	12 (63.2)	18 (31.6)
At least monthly	15 (31.3)	12 (44.4)	3 (14.3)	6 (7.9)	3 (15.8)	3 (5.3)

Pam, who at the time of interview was a psychology student at University A, described a more general theme evident in other students' comments about the appeal of other commercial activities, especially going to the cinema, in the following way:

Orange Wednesdays, I think that's good 'cos I'm on Orange. Another one of my mates is on Orange, so we get them and then my boyfriend and another one of my friends come and we go ... One of my friends is dead into films, it's usually him that's like 'Let's go see this', and then we will all go type of thing. But I do love films; I'll just buy a load of DVDs off Amazon and stuff and just watch them at home as well.

The two most popular costly leisure activities which the greatest proportion of students tended to regularly engage was however shopping and drinking alcohol (Seddon, 2011), which first developed during the mid-teenage years and had notably high loyalty rates among students throughout their leisure careers. One-quarter of students shopped weekly for leisure (Table 7.3) while three-quarters of the sample drank alcohol at least once a week (Table 7.4).

Table 7.3 Frequency of students' shopping for leisure by residential status (n and %)

Frequency of participation	Overall (n=124)	Residential (n=93)	Commuting (n=31)
At least monthly	115 (92.7)	85 (91.4)	30 (96.8)
At least weekly	30 (24.2)	17 (18.3)	13 (41.9)

Table 7.4 Frequency of students' current alcohol consumption by residential status (n and %)

How often drank alcohol	Overall (n=124)	Residential (n=93)	Commuting (n=31)
Never drank	4 (3.2)	3 (3.2)	1 (3.2)
Not in last the last 12 months	2 (1.6)	2 (2.2)	0 (0.0)
Less than one day a week	22 (17.7)	12 (12.9)	10 (32.3)
1 day a week	30 (24.2)	24 (25.8)	6 (19.4)
2 days a week	39 (31.5)	32 (34.4)	7 (22.6)
3 or more days a week	27 (21.8)	20 (21.5)	7 (22.6)

Residential status was most closely associated with students' engagement in these activities: twice as many commuting students (42 per cent) than residential students (18 per cent) shopped weekly, which reflected differences in their current personal circumstances, including higher proportions of disposable income available to facilitate their broader leisure lifestyles. For the frequency of students' alcohol consumption the opposite pattern was observed, with more than eight-in-ten residential students drinking alcohol at least weekly compared to less than two-thirds of commuting students. Given this, and the notable increase in the proportion of residential students drinking at least monthly (see Chapter 6) when they made the transition to university, it appeared that the context of university life was positively associated with more frequent alcohol consumption by residential students (Borsari & Carey, 2001; Dempster, 2009, 2011; De Visser & Smith, 2007; Terleki et al., 2014).

In relation to the volume of alcohol consumption, however, being male and studying sport were the two clearest predictors of highest alcohol consumption on the evening students drank the most (Table 7.5). For example, on the evening when students tended to drink the most, one-half of males reported consuming 20.1 units or more compared to less than one-fifth of female students, while over two-fifths of sports students consumed more than 20.1 units on the night they typically drank to excess compared to less than one-fifth of business and psychology students (Table 7.5). Thus, while being a residential student was associated with more frequent alcohol consumption, it did not appear to be related to higher levels of alcohol consumption on the evening students typically drank the most, which was more clearly predicted by sex (males) and subject of study (sport).

Data generated by the follow-up semi-structured interviews also revealed that the excessive consumption of alcohol by all students, but particularly sports students (Clayton & Harris, 2008; Dempster, 2009, 2011; Kwan et al., 2012), was closely associated with their tendency to purchase relatively cheap alcohol from local supermarkets and other outlets to engage in what they described as ‘pre-drinks’; that is to say, the consumption of alcoholic beverages, usually in students’ homes, before ‘going out’ (Aldridge et al., 2011; West, 2009). As Lisa, a sports student from University B suggested, part of the motivation for pre-drinking was to consume alcohol to instil confidence by purchasing heavily discounted alcohol from supermarkets before then ‘going out’ with friends:

Table 7.5 Average number of alcoholic units consumed on the night students typically drank the most by subject of study and sex (n and %)

Units of alcohol	Sport			Business and psychology		
	Overall	Males	Females	Overall	Males	Females
1 - 5.0 units	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	12 (16.9)	2 (11.1)	10 (18.9)
5.1 - 10 units	11 (23.4)	6 (23.1)	5 (23.8)	18 (25.4)	2 (11.1)	16 (30.2)
10.1 - 15 units	9 (19.1)	4 (15.4)	5 (23.8)	14 (19.7)	2 (11.1)	12 (22.6)
15.1 - 20 units	7 (14.9)	1 (3.8)	6 (28.6)	13 (18.3)	5 (27.8)	8 (15.1)
20.1 - 25 units	9 (19.1)	5 (19.2)	4 (19.0)	7 (9.9)	3 (26.7)	4 (7.5)
25.1 - 30 units	5 (10.6)	5 (19.2)	0 (0.0)	5 (7.0)	2 (11.1)	3 (5.7)
30.1 or more units	6 (12.8)	5 (19.2)	1 (4.8)	2 (2.8)	2 (11.1)	0 (0.0)
Total	47	26	21	71	18	53

I definitely pre-drink ... We always try to get the offers and stuff at the supermarkets ... I know for me it's confidence ... I'll not go out unless I've had a drink beforehand because it just gives you that confidence then to sort of actually go out, like bump into people.

The tendency for many students' alcohol-oriented leisure lives to be supported by the purchase of alcohol intended for consumption in the home, before engaging in night-time leisure economies (Aldridge et al., 2011; Measham & Shiner, 2009; Katainen & Rolando, 2014), was also brought out clearly in the comments of another sports student, Mike, also at University B, who said:

People come round to the house to pre-drink and like we play drinking games ... I live with like seven lads and six of us drink and we all know if you go down Tesco's, get a crate of beer, especially ... for £2.50 for eight bottles ... [it's] a bargain. So you can get a fiver and you get like 16 little bottles you know that's going to do you for night ... If you did get like a bottle of amaretto or vodka, or bottles, you know, can drink to your heart's content, because you know you've paid for it.

In this regard, it was clear that among many students the consumption of alcohol in this manner was something that was undertaken to manage the financial constraints to which students were subject. It was also apparent that the purchase of discounted alcohol played a more or less central role in students' concern for generating leisure contexts in which sociability and a quest for excitement were amongst their priorities (Aldridge et al., 2011; Katainen & Rolando, 2014; Smith & Foxcroft, 2009). For example, as the following extract taken from an interview held with a psychology student at University A revealed, the

communal consumption of alcohol during occasions of pre-drinking was often described as 'more exciting' than abstaining from alcohol altogether, and as being a feature of having fewer 'responsibilities' than other people:

Emma: All your mates are going out drinking; it's cheap [alcohol] so you just drink with them ... pre-drinks before you go out you all get together anyway it's like a get together before you go out ... is more exciting when you're drinking than if you were just going out and not drinking ... Students have got less responsibilities, so they do drink a lot more than what you would if you weren't at uni ... if you haven't got any money you just drink any drink you can get ... Just shove shots down your neck.

The central value students placed on 'having a laugh' with others whilst consuming alcohol in the home, which for many was regarded as providing the main appeal of pre-drinking, was also brought out particularly by Kai who, as a psychology student studying at University A, explained how:

I will always prefer to sit around have a laugh having a drink and in a club you can't do that 'cos obviously the music is blaring out. So when you're pre-drinking it's good to just sit around and have a laugh ... I think that's the whole sense of pre-drinking 'cos that's the one time throughout the three years everyone's just together drinking up having a laugh then going out.

The desire for students to engage in regular, often heavy, episodes of drinking alcohol with like-minded peers was not confined to students' discussions of pre-drinking for, as Gaz, a business student at University B emphasized, this was also an important element of students'

concern with acquiring new friends at the beginning of their academic studies. In particular, he commented that:

First year is completely different to anything I have ever done, or will ever do ... I don't think you will ever experience anything like that again ... In first year at university your main target more than anything else is getting a group of mates ... with your house mates some of them might not be interested in the sport you play, so if you have all got some free time off and they are saying 'Let's go down the pub, let's go to cinema, let's go shopping or something', you are less likely to say 'I'm going to go to the gym, actually' ... You would almost become left out.

The felt need by students to 'fit in' (Jeffs & Smith, 1998; Miles, 2000) to peer networks immediately upon entering university was similarly emphasized by other participants, including Natalie, who at the time of interview studied psychology at University B and who described her university-based experiences of alcohol thus:

I drank the most probably in my first year and probably the first three months of the first year and then I kind of slowed down ... The party bug got in me in the first I just want to go and party ... I was more worried about making friends and doing well in my first year. It's sort of a social thing because you're coming to uni and you're trying to make friends and the people you are trying to make friends with are also drinking, so you're sort of doing it to be sociable and to look like you're one of the gang.

For reasons explained in more detail below, many students felt that the regular consumption of alcohol is often regarded as normal *rite de passage* characteristic of the youth life-stage

and one that usually preceded their enrolment at university (Aldridge et al., 2011; Hendry et al., 1993; Parker et al., 2002; West, 2009). It was clear, however, that for many interviewees their unfolding alcohol-oriented lives were strengthened by the existence of university cultures in which alcohol consumption was normalized, celebrated, and in many respects further encouraged as they negotiated the transition from college to university (Aldridge et al., 2011; Dempster, 2009, 2011; De Visser & Smith, 2007; Kwan et al., 2012). Indeed, this was particularly prominent in the accounts many students gave of their introduction to university life, including those of Rhianna, a psychology student at University B, who said:

It's sort of the norm isn't it to consume a lot more alcohol? ... I guess it's the culture. A lot of people feel the pressure to don't they? They feel the pressure that they have to, in sort of like fresher's week you have to be seen to be like going out and getting drunk or whatever ... I guess drinking and going out becomes prioritized more than it would in the real world.

Other students drew attention to the key motivations – as they perceived them – for their current consumption of alcohol in university settings and commercial leisure contexts in which they spent considerable proportions of their time socializing with friends. As the following extract taken from an interview with Justin, a sports student at University B, suggests, central among these motivations was social acceptance by peers (especially close friends) and enhanced self-confidence even though heavy episodes of drinking occasionally led to emotional guilt and self-questioning:

Justin: It's just like confidence and stuff ... you just have more of a laugh ... To be fair you wake up in the morning and I think straight away 'Why did I drink, why have done

that? I feel stupid, I feel a fool, I'm not doing that again'. Two days later I do the same. I went out Thursday and I went out Monday and got pretty drunk on both of those nights and both mornings I thought (sighs) 'What did I do that for?', because I can hardly remember the night sometimes and it's not like I've got good memories of it. So it's just like a waste, but at the time, in the moment when there's eight lads all having a laugh, you just keep on drinking ... You don't want to be the one standing there hardly drunk when all your mates are drunk ... if you don't get drunk then you know you might be pushed out a little bit.

The degree to which many students' leisure lifestyles incorporated alcohol – both inside and away from university – was also associated with the increased independence and freedom attending university brought for them, and the presence of friends within their alcohol-oriented networks who played a role in encouraging the consumption of alcohol (Borsari & Carey, 2001; Dempster, 2009, 2011; De Visser and Smith, 2007; Haycock & Smith, 2014b). Reflecting positively upon the loosening of parental constraint and monitoring having left the family home to attend university, one psychology student from University A said:

Kai: In uni its [drinking] just gone to another level 'cos obviously you have got no home to go home to, you can walk home drunk it doesn't matter ... Friday nights are the best [now] 'cos you go out and have a drink up and Saturday you sit in bed and watch the football. That was pretty much my routine: Friday, go out with my friends have a drink up, Saturday ... there's two games on ... so you would wake up ... [for the] morning kick-off, watch that ... then your friends would come in and sit with you and watch the second game ... You just drink as much as you want really. 'Cos you know you can lay around in bed all day. That's the thing as well, you can lay around in

bed all day, if you're at home your mum will come and say 'What you doing in bed? Get up and do something'.

The inherent flexibility that interviewees associated with university life led other students, such as Emily, a psychology student at University B, to juxtapose the relative freedom of their daily leisure schedules and university work demands in the following way:

Emily: We can drink when we want. We haven't got many things to worry about apart from early lectures ... you have not really got a timetable to stick to; it allows you to fit around your drinking and your socializing ... because of the flexibility of uni and because we are not being told when we have got to do our work, we can fit it around social life. Obviously when you have got a job you can't do that.

In addition to the more generic features of university life which many students felt helped increase their consumption of alcohol in various leisure contexts, as Chapter 6 made clear, university sports teams were also identified as important contexts where drinking alcohol was built-in to the social lives of students (Bryshun & Young, 1999, 2007; Dempster, 2009, 2011; Kwan et al., 2012). On occasions, students explained that alcohol-related initiation ceremonies that accompanied their introduction to university sports teams (usually in their first year of study) provided them with an immediate opportunity to demonstrate their ability to consume significant amounts of alcohol and to seek social approval from team-mates (Bryshun & Young, 1999, 2007; King, 2000; Young & White, 1997). Mike, a sport student at University B, described his experiences thus:

Mike: My first ever game was Varsity against [name of university] and on the way back we did a chilly run, oblivious to what a chilly run was, and all the second and third

years were singing songs and I was oblivious until someone says, 'Freshers into your underwear' after drinking like four or five bottles and then coming back to the bar and saying be here in half an hour and then drinking all sorts of alcohol.

Female sport students, such as Sarah, a psychology student at University A, recalled similar experiences of alcohol-related initiation ceremonies in their first year at university as follows:

Sarah: In my first year there wasn't really an initiation it's just you are given a mother, it's called 'Mother and Daughter' ... on tour we had mothers and daughters so we pair people up and handcuff people together and stuff like that. But it's just like pub golf so your scores and put together so there are winners at the end. I'm obviously going to egg my daughter on 'cos I want to win, so it's like downing every drink in one. That was another messy time as well, I have never seen so many freshers throw up in my life all in one go, and it's funny.

Following their initiation into the alcohol-related subcultures said to be characteristic of many university sports teams, the interviewees explained that 'team socials' which were often held after a competitive fixture invariably incorporated alcohol-based games (Bryshun & Young, 1999, 2007; Dempster, 2009, 2011; King, 2000). This was perhaps most clearly evident in the accounts students gave of themed team events, especially 'pub golf', where the central objective of the activities often involved the excessive consumption of alcohol in the company of other team players. Sarah, went on to describe her experiences of socials whilst playing for the university netball team by saying:

If you have played netball and you have won it's always good to go out after 'cos you are just like on a high ... Every other week you have a social, you dress up, all the girls go out, drinking games ... We do pub golf or we do a paired thing ... with, like, freshers but ... we don't really do ... some of the horrible things the rugby [do like] ... making them get naked on a bar in a pub.

Another psychology student – Sue, a sport student who also attended University A and was a team-mate of Sarah – similarly emphasized the social importance of engaging in drinking alcohol with sports teams thus:

Wednesday is just drinking ... we sound like right alcoholics but it's just student life isn't it? ... I had nothing [academic study] on a Wednesday 'cos it was netball; road trips with netball is just ledge as well so it was just like the whole thing ... Go get your wine, go get really drunk, and that would be it. You wouldn't need a lot of encouragement. It's just Wednesday night and let's just go out and get lairy [drunk].

For many students the consumption of alcohol – at university and during the teenage years – was a common and largely positive experience that did not prevent them from participating in sport; indeed, for sports students, participating in sport seemed to encourage the regularity with which they drank and the amount of alcohol they consumed (Clayton & Harris, 2008; Dempster, 2009, 2011; Kwan et al., 2012). For some students (particularly commuting students), however, their commitment to representing the sports in which they were currently involved did discourage them from engaging more fully in the alcohol-related features of university life. Describing the ways in which his commitment to enhancing personal fitness

and sports performance led him to avoid drinking regularly, Paul, a sport student at University A, said:

I haven't got the chance to keep drinking every night 'cos I'm training the next day or playing matches the next day so I can't go out and get absolutely hammered on a Friday night 'cos I play football Saturday and Sunday ... It's not practical ... because I want to keep myself fit. I realize the impact alcohol can have on lives as well ... I would say at college I didn't really drink ... I have gone to more parties ... whilst at university but not much.

Another commuting sport student from University A similarly expressed the view that she had never participated in university 'socials' because she valued participating in sport more highly, and when she did consume alcohol during her leisure time this was always undertaken with her team-mates:

Leonie: I take sport more importantly than going out ... I tend to have more of a social life outside of uni, like I have never taken part in the university social events, I have always just gone out with my friends from my cricket club and my football club rather than university friends but they are probably more social than me.

It was noted in the previous chapter that sex and subject of study were the two clearest predictors of students' pre-university alcohol careers, and that the links between sport participation and increased alcohol consumption were common and longstanding (Clayton & Harris, 2008; Kwan et al., 2012; Sheard & Dunning, 1973). These tendencies continued to be observed when students made the transition to HE which had the effect of strengthening the

propensity for sports students, and males, to be the social groups who were most likely to drink excessive amounts of alcohol. Once at university, being a residential student was also associated with increased likelihood to drink alcohol. This was supported by the presence of student union venues offering discounted offers on alcohol, and opportunities to engage in age-aggregated student pubs and nightclubs in the commercialized night time leisure economies with which universities were associated (Aldridge et al., 2011; Katainen and Rolando, 2014; West, 2009). For students who drank, the regular consumption of alcohol was often perceived as an unremarkable feature of their university-based figurations which comprised a higher number, and range, of peers who helped foster their present-day engagement in alcohol-oriented leisure whether on or off campus (Borsari & Carey, 2001; Terleki et al., 2014). In bringing like-minded students together in multiple peer-oriented figurations, university environments were social contexts which strengthened their predispositions for consuming alcohol and consolidated these within students' unfolding individual habituses, and those which are shared with groups of students who have been habituated through similar experiences (Dunning, 2002; Dunning & Hughes, 2013).

Students' current participation in high culture leisure

Reflecting their tendency to occupy part of only a minority of students' emergent leisure careers, few students reported currently being involved (at least monthly) in various high culture leisure activities, namely: playing a musical instrument, listening to classical music, and attending an art gallery or museum (Bennett et al., 2010). Not surprisingly, these activities were almost entirely absent from the discussions held with students in the semi-structured interviews. Data from the structured interviews, however, indicated that playing a musical instrument and listening to classical music were undertaken by approximately one-third of students during the last 12 months, and one-sixth did so monthly. Similarly, while a

greater proportion of students attended an art gallery or museum in the last 12 months (approximately four-in-ten), just five students (4 per cent) did so on a monthly basis.

As the analysis of students' leisure careers revealed (see Chapter 6), the most consistent predictor of students' participation in high culture leisure was their social class background (Bennett et al., 2010). Being male, especially among those studying either business or psychology, was an important predictor of students' propensity to play a musical instrument, which developed most notably between 13- and 19-years-old. Indeed, males (30 per cent) were more than three times as likely as female students (9 per cent) to play a musical instrument at least monthly, and male students studying business and psychology (42 per cent) were almost twice as likely as their counterparts studying sport (22 per cent) to do so. Students' interest in classical music was again closely associated with their social class background and subject of study. As shown in Table 7.7 and 7.8 more middle-class students and those who studied either business or psychology were more likely to have listened to classical music in the last 12 months and did so more regularly. Nearly one-fifth of more middle-class students listened to classical musical at least monthly compared to just over one-in-ten of their working class peers, and over one-fifth of business and psychology students (compared to less than one-in-ten sport students) did so (Bennett et al., 2010; Roberts, 2006). Finally, the only discernible difference in students' attendance at art galleries or museums in the last 12 months was also observed in relation to their social class background, with middle-class students being almost 10 per cent more likely than their working-class peers to have attended an art gallery or museum in the last 12 months.

Although male students were most likely to play a musical instrument and higher proportions of students studying business and psychology tended to listen to classical music, being more

Table 7.6 Frequency of students' playing of a musical instrument by subject and sex (n and %)

Frequency of participation	Sport			Business and psychology		
	Overall (n=48)	Males (n=27)	Females (n=21)	Overall (n=76)	Males (n=19)	Females (n=57)
No participation last 12 months	39 (81.3)	21 (77.8)	18 (85.7)	47 (61.8)	7 (36.8)	40 (70.2)
Less than monthly participation	2 (4.2)	0 (0.0)	2 (9.5)	15 (19.7)	4 (21.1)	11 (19.3)
At least monthly	7 (14.6)	6 (22.2)	1 (4.8)	14 (18.4)	8 (42.1)	6 (10.5)
At least weekly	6 (12.5)	5 (18.5)	1 (4.8)	7 (9.2)	5 (26.3)	2 (3.5)

Table 7.7 Students' consumption of classical music by sex, residential status and social class (n and %)

Frequency of participation	Overall (n=124)	No parent attended HE (n=71)	1 or more parents attended HE (n=53)
No participation last 12 months	85 (68.5)	53 (74.6)	32 (60.4)
Less than monthly participation	20 (16.1)	9 (12.7)	11 (20.8)
At least monthly	19 (15.3)	9 (12.7)	10 (18.9)
At least weekly	13 (10.5)	5 (7.0)	8 (15.1)

middle-class was the most consistent predictor of students' participation in high culture leisure (Bennett et al., 2010), which developed most notably during the teenage years in the context of students' socialization with parents (especially mothers). For reasons explained in the previous chapter, participation in high culture leisure activities such as listening to classical music and attending an art gallery or museum was confined to a minority of students' present-day leisure. Engagement in this type of leisure distinguished the relevant participants from their peers because of their greater ability to use the resources invested in them by parents earlier in the life course to structure their current leisure participation (Bennett et al., 2010; Widdop & Cutts, 2013; Widdop et al., 2014). Their present-day cultural consumption of classical music and similar activities was, in effect, an extension of these students' distinct introduction to particular forms of cultural capital when young which involved, among other things, learning to become familiar with types of music and subsequently developing distinct tastes which were loaded with cultural and symbolic significance and which marked them out from the leisure biographies described by other students (Bennett et al., 2010; Widdop & Cutts, 2013; Widdop et al., 2014).

Table 7.8 Students' consumption of classical music by subject and sex (n and %)

Frequency of participation	Sport			Business and psychology		
	Overall (n=48)	Males (n=27)	Females (n=21)	Overall (n=76)	Males (n=19)	Females (n=57)
No participation last 12 months	38 (79.2)	21 (77.8)	17 (81.0)	47 (61.8)	9 (47.4)	38 (66.7)
Less than monthly participation	6 (12.5)	4 (14.8)	2 (9.5)	14 (18.4)	6 (31.6)	8 (14.0)
At least monthly	4 (8.3)	2 (7.4)	2 (9.5)	15 (19.7)	4 (21.1)	11 (19.3)
At least weekly	3 (6.3)	2 (7.4)	1 (4.8)	10 (13.2)	1 (5.3)	9 (15.8)

Table 7.9 Frequency of students' attendance at an art gallery or museum by social class background (n and %)

Frequency of participation	Overall (n=124)	No parent attended HE (n=71)	1 or more parents attended HE (n=53)
No participation last 12 months	69 (55.6)	42 (59.2)	27 (50.9)
Less than monthly participation	50 (40.3)	26 (36.6)	24 (45.3)
At least monthly	5 (4.0)	3 (4.2)	2 (3.8)

Summary

The purpose of this chapter has been to analyse students' present-day participation in, and experiences of, various low cost, costly, and high culture leisure activities. In common with many uses of leisure (Roberts, 2013a), students' current engagement in each of the three typologies of activities was most closely predicted by what they had done previously, that is, during their leisure careers thus far (see Chapter 6). There was indeed clear continuity in students' participation in each of the leisure activities described, with attending university appearing to reinforce the predispositions students had developed earlier in the life course. Male students remained the most likely computer games players, readers of sport and fitness magazines, and males (as well as females) who studied sport and were residential students were more likely to watch live sport and drink more alcohol currently than other males. Reading books for leisure remained dominated by females, while the use of social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter and other media-oriented leisure (e.g. TV and listening to music) was unrelated to gender having been undertaken by the majority of students. The next chapter begins to make sociological sense of these continuities in participation, together with those which characterized students' sport careers, in relation to the processes of habitus formation during childhood and the accumulation of capital that helped predispose students towards engaging in particular activities well before they entered the HE environment.

Chapter Eight

Explaining University Students' Sport Participation:

The Significance of Sport and Leisure Careers

Introduction

It was suggested in Chapter 1 that much of the existing cross-sectional evidence on sport participation has indicated that those with higher levels of education – obtained from attending HE – are more likely to be present-day participants, and are also more likely to remain sports-active into later life than those who leave education once they reach the minimum school-leaving age (Coalter, 2007, 2013; Delaney & Keaney, 2005; Farrell et al., 2014; Lunn, 2010; Lunn et al., 2013; van Tuyckom & Scheerder, 2010a). It has also been argued that, despite a doubling in the number of students going to university since the 1980s, and a sustained period of investment in policy interventions designed to boost youth participation which has occurred in the context of other favourable trends, youth and adult sport participation rates remain stubbornly resistant to change. The central research questions of this thesis, therefore, were: (i) What effect, if any, does HE have on students' sport participation?; (ii) To what extent do students' sport and leisure careers explain their present-day participation?; and (iii) How might the relationship between students' sport and leisure careers be explained sociologically?

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the evidence presented in this thesis which helps shed some light on the answers to these questions, and provides the beginnings of an explanation for why those with HE qualifications are more likely to participate in sport as overall participation rates remain static. In doing so, the chapter will: (i) discuss the

differences in students' sport and leisure participation before and during their time in HE; (ii) explain how these differences can be traced back to experiences in the childhood life stage, and particularly to processes of habitus formation and capital accumulation; and (iii) argue that to adequately understand students' present-day sport participation, and the trajectories of their sport careers, requires these to be located within students' broader leisure lifestyles and how these change during the life course.

Differences in students' present-day sport participation and sport careers

The findings of this study indicated that the two clearest predictors of differences in the present-day sport participation and sport careers of university students were subject of study and sex, with sport students and males being the most likely participants over the life course and whilst at university. These differences first emerged during childhood, widened from age 12-13-years-old, and remained relatively set from age 16 onwards. In other words, the differences in the present-day sport participation of university students could not be attributed to a 'HE effect' as previous research has suggested (Coalter, 2007, 2013; Delaney & Keaney, 2005; Lunn, 2010; Lunn et al., 2013; van Tuyckom and Scheerder, 2010a), but were instead traceable to their pre-university experiences and especially those in childhood (Birchwood et al., 2008; Pot et al., 2014; Stuij, 2013). Indeed, there was no overall increase in the proportion of students who played sport, nor was there an increase in the number of sports played regularly by students, whilst at university.

Where attending university did appear to make some difference to the sport participation of students was in the kinds of sports played, though the changes here were again essentially continuations of gradual changes in students' sporting biographies that were occurring prior to entering university, and especially from the mid- to late-teenage years. More specifically,

during the time students spent in HE, there was a decline in the number of traditional team sports which they played alongside a growing preference for more individualized, flexible and lifestyle-oriented activities. Sport students generally engaged in fewer team sports, preferring instead to specialize in one team sport alongside more recreational and individualized activities. In contrast, non-sport students either continued their engagement in individualized and more commercially-oriented activities or were beginning to drop out of sport altogether.

Although it has until now been assumed that the often rather generous, convenient, and relatively cheap sports provisions available on university campuses would stimulate increases in participation (e.g. Coalter, 2013; Burke et al., 2006; Downward & Rasciute, 2014; Leslie et al., 1999), in this study facilities made no significant positive impact on whether students participated in sport on or off campus. The facilities discussed by students, which included sports halls, a gym, squash and tennis courts, and other facilities including swimming pools and an athletics track common in many universities (TNS-BMRB, 2013), were all dominated largely by sport, male, and residential students. In other words, only those students who were already predisposed to using sports facilities of the kind offered by universities were likely to make use of them, rather than generating expected increases in participation among a wider pool of students. Significantly, although the quality of, and satisfaction with, facilities are important for encouraging sport participation (Rowe, 2015), female students especially were more likely to be dissatisfied with the quality and environment of on-campus sports facilities, which often led them to exercise away from university at either public, or more usually private, facilities.

Differences in students' present-day leisure participation and leisure careers

In relation to students' engagement in non-sporting uses of leisure, the data from this study revealed that there was a great deal of similarity and continuity in the kinds of activities undertaken by males and females whilst attending university and in their pre-university leisure careers. Among the activities in which high proportions of both sexes participated throughout the life course, including at university, were social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter, media-oriented leisure (such as watching TV and listening to music), shopping, and going to the cinema.

As with students' sport participation, sex was the most significant predictor of participation in some leisure activities throughout the course of their lives. For example, males were more likely to play computer games and to gamble, while males who studied sport were also more likely to watch live sport. Conversely, females were more likely to read books for leisure at all points in the life course thus far, while males tended to be readers of sport and fitness magazines before and during their time at university. The only major difference observed in relation to students' social class background was for activities in the high culture category. Here, a significant minority of more middle-class students were committed present-day consumers of established high culture activities such as playing a musical instrument and listening to classical music, which typically differentiated them from the majority of students who had never developed tastes for these activities and did not currently participate in them. For each of these activities, attending university made little notable difference either to whether students were present-day participants, or to the frequency (whether increased or decreased) with which they were undertaken.

Where attending university did appear to make a difference was in relation to the consumption of alcohol, since most students reported an increase in their drinking immediately upon entering university and continuously until age 20, with females and residential students being most likely to do so. Being at university was also associated with the propensity for males and sport students to consume the largest quantity of alcohol on a day when students drank the most.

Given the relative insignificance of attending university for increases in sport participation and engagement in a wide range of leisure activities, the next section offers the beginnings of an explanation for why participation differences existed and how these can be traced back to students' experiences during childhood. Particular emphasis will be placed on the significance of habitus formation and capital accumulation as two key social processes that, it will be suggested, help to explain more adequately the differential impact of students' predispositions on their present-day participation and careers in sport and leisure.

Habitus formation and capital accumulation

As Birchwood et al. (2008, p. 284) have noted, 'in many kinds of leisure the people who continue to take part throughout adulthood were usually introduced and became committed when they were children. Sport is no different from many other leisure activities in this respect'. The findings of this study also indicated that students who were introduced and became committed to sport during childhood were more likely to be present-day participants and had longer running sport careers. In this respect, it was childhood – rather than youth – that was the most critical life-stage in which the foundations for students' subsequent participation in sport and leisure were laid (Nielsen et al., 2012; Parry, 2013; Pot et al., 2014; Quarmby & Dagkas, 2010, 2013; Stuij, 2013), and in which some of the more impressionable

phases of habitus formation took place (Elias, 1978; Engström, 2008; Stuij, 2003). The findings of this study also revealed that understanding the development of students' sport and leisure careers, and the habituses on which they were built, requires an appreciation of the various figurations or networks to which they belong in the present-day, and to which they belonged in the past. This is because, as Elias (1978, p. 72) noted:

the figurations of interdependent human beings cannot be explained if one studies human beings singly. In many cases the opposite procedure is advisable – one can understand many aspects of the behaviour or actions of individual people only if one sets out from the study of the pattern of their interdependence, the structure of their societies, in short from the figurations they form with each other.

Developing an adequate understanding of the processes by which differences in students' sport and leisure participation first emerge during childhood thus involves investigating how changes in their individual biographies (conventionally described as 'agency') occurred in the context of changes in the wider society (traditionally described as 'structure'), and how these are expressed in processes of habitus formation in which behaviours become, in the Eliasian sense, 'second nature' or embodied at the social and psychological level (Dunning, 2002; Dunning & Hughes, 2013). The organization of students' psychological make-up into an embodied habitus was a dynamic process that began at birth and continued to develop as the changing figurations in which they were bound-up became more or less complex, and perceived as more-or-less compelling (Dunning & Hughes, 2013; van Krieken, 1998). As students' habituses developed in this way, their predispositions for sport participation during childhood were developed and redeveloped in the context of their complex, historically produced and reproduced, networks of interdependencies which comprised, among other

groups, their parents, siblings, other family members, and peers (Engström, 2008; Nielsen et al., 2012; Stuij, 2013) who, in Engström's (2008, p. 325) terms, were 'important value transferors' of sporting tastes, preferences and predispositions.

While partly related to family socio-economic status, during childhood students' individual habitus was developed most impressionably within the cultural dimension of family environments where parents, in particular, helped transmit different propensities among their offspring towards present-day sport participation (Birchwood et al., 2008; Neilsen et al., 2012; Stuij, 2013). In particular, students who were the most sports-active (sport students and male) currently were those who, from an early age, were brought up in families in which sport participation was highly valued and normalized by parents (Birchwood et al., 2008; Nielsen et al., 2012; Quarmby & Dagkas, 2010, 2013; Stuij, 2013). For these students, sport participation appeared to become 'a deep anchorage in the personality structure' (Elias & Scotson, 1994, p. 103), or habitus, which developed during the course of being socialized more intensely and extensively than other students during childhood (Engström, 2008; Evans & Bairner, 2012; Evans & Davies, 2010; Nielsen et al., 2012). These typically included traditional team sports (e.g. football and netball) alongside individual activities (e.g. swimming and running) that laid the foundations for future engagement in other sports that were undertaken by students as they made the transition from childhood to youth.

The process of habitus formation during childhood, and the development of wide sporting repertoires (Engström, 2008; Roberts & Brodie, 1992), was closely associated with the 'amounts of material, social and educational capitals' (Nielsen et al., 2012: 15) students acquired and was underpinned by their parents' concern with engendering in them a positive

attitude towards the intrinsic value of sport (Engström, 2008; Haycock & Smith, 2014a; Nielsen et al., 2012; Stui, 2013). The least active students were less likely to discuss experiences of this kind and acquired less ‘knowledge, experience and competencies ... from a childhood environment ... [necessary] for participation in the fields of sports or other physical activities later in life’ (Nielsen et al., 2012, p. 4). The major differences between the most and least active students in the study, therefore, were generated in part by the unequal distribution of family capital between them and the associated differences in individual habitus formation which helped generate the observed differences in present-day participation (Engström, 2008; Nielsen et al., 2012; Stuij, 2013).

It was through encouraging their offspring to participate in a range of sports that the families of which the most active students were a part operated as social contexts where the accumulation of cultural and social capital was accomplished, initially through the transmission of parental values and preferences during primary socialization (Green, 2010; Kay, 2004; Lareau, 2011; Stuij, 2013). The kinds of primary socialization practices students recalled in relation to their childhood experiences of sport typically incorporated a number of features and often resembled what Lareau (2011) calls ‘concerted cultivation’. These were: having two sports active parents who encouraged them to participate in sport, often for enjoyment and the ‘love’ of sport, and who experienced fewer financial and transport constraints than other parents (e.g. Davison et al., 2003; Haycock and Smith, 2014a; Nielsen et al., 2012; Pot et al., 2014; Scheerder et al., 2005; Vandermeersch et al., 2014). Parents of the more frequent present-day participants were also better able to reinvest their offspring with symbolically significant forms of social, cultural, physical and economic capital to support the construction of their short- and longer-term sport careers. These parental investments in students’ childhood sport appeared particularly efficacious for transmitting the

kinds of values and norms of sport-supportive cultures that provided the foundations of their dominant cultural practices (Birchwood et al., 2008; Roberts & Brodie, 1992; Stuij, 2013). Growing up with active parents who valued sport and who purposively fostered participation by developing students' repertoire of skills, interests and predispositions – which collectively comprised sporting capital (Nielsen et al., 2012; Pot et al., 2014; Rowe, 2015) – helped maximize students' higher levels of present-day participation (Evans & Davies, 2010; Green, 2010; Haycock & Smith, 2014a). It also assisted in developing the richness and breadth of students' (especially males) sporting biographies in the childhood life-stage which meant their overall sport careers were less vulnerable to disruption or collapse (Engström, 2008; Jakobsson et al., 2012; Roberts, 2014; Roberts & Brodie, 1992).

The least active students – that is, those studying business and psychology (especially females) – were, however, socialized into childhood familial networks where sport participation was not as highly valued, or normalized, to the same extent or when compared to other leisure activities favoured by their parents (Quarmby & Dagkas, 2010, 2013; Quarmby et al., 2011). Indeed, when asked about the parental encouragement, if any, they received during childhood, the least active students explained that it was their father, or sometimes their mother, who dominated their childhood sport socialization. Fathers often used sport as a means of engaging in shared leisure experiences, and as a means of communicating and bonding with their children (Harrington, 2009, 2013; Kay, 2009a; Quarmby & Dagkas, 2010). This included fathers playing a direct role in the organization of students' early engagement in sport, whether as a coach, facilitator, or sports enthusiast seeking to 'pass on' a love of their own sport to their offspring (Kay, 2009a). Similar roles were performed by their mothers, particularly in relation to stereotypically feminine sports such as dance, ballet and gymnastics, though mothers were more likely to play a more central

role in the planning and organization of students' childhood experiences of sport within the context of family leisure (Harrington, 2009, 2013; Shaw & Dawson, 2001; Thompson, 1999). Significantly, mothers were less likely than students' fathers to be directly involved as active sports participants alongside their offspring, and instead provided much of the 'hidden' – and typically gendered – work of family leisure in which they reproduced occasions of shared family leisure, often at the expense of their own (Harrington, 2009, 2013; Shaw, 2008; Shaw & Dawson, 2001). Notwithstanding this engagement of either fathers or mothers in students' early sports socialization, the ambivalent attitudes parents held towards sport, and the transmission of largely non-active family-based cultural practices, meant that during childhood the least active students in the sample had begun to develop a habitus in which sport was a marginal leisure interest (Nielsen et al., 2012; Quarmby and Dagkas, 2010, 2013; Stuij, 2013). These students were also the least likely to have developed sufficiently rich and durable sporting biographies or repertoires that provided them with the basis on which to build their subsequent sport careers (Engström, 2008; Jakobsson et al., 2012; Roberts, 2014; Roberts & Brodie, 1992), which reduced the likelihood that they would be active at university.

As significant as parents and family were in the primary socialization of students into sport during childhood, it was also clear that friends and peers became increasingly significant to students' increasingly complex networks during the transition from childhood to youth in a dynamic, reciprocal and contingent process of secondary socialization (Green, 2010; Lareau, 2011; Stuij, 2013). For the most active students, being part of sport-oriented peer networks during the course of growing up strengthened the predispositions, tastes and skills they acquired as part of normative family practices to which they had been exposed during

childhood (Nielsen et al., 2012; Roberts & Brodie, 1992; Stuij, 2013). During leisure, in particular, peers became significant agents in the on-going socialization of students in sport and to the continued ‘internalisation of sporting capital’ (Stuij, 2013, p. 6) that characterized this process, whether in formal settings such as sports clubs or in more informal leisure contexts where sport was being played. In these leisure sites, the most active students ‘both influenced and were influenced by their peers’ (Stuij, 2013, p. 9) towards engaging in sport on a regular basis, often for intrinsic purposes, and almost always in the company of their peers – as their social equals (Roberts, 1996) – who occupied significant positions within their developing networks of interdependence. The reproduction of networks in which predispositions towards sport participation and developing similar interests thus helped the more active students to develop group habituses (Dunning, 2002; Stuij, 2013) with other ‘sporty people’ who had been, and continued to be, habituated through similar experiences (Nielsen et al., 2012). This mutually reinforcing process of group habitus formation continued throughout the adolescent years and into the time students spent at university, where the well-established predispositions for sport among sports-active students better enabled them to develop new networks and alliances with similar students which sustained participation (Haycock & Smith, 2014b; Roberts & Brodie, 1992). During university, the attraction of like-minded students to each other strengthened the continuity of their sport careers and encouraged further loyalty towards sport (Roberts, 2013a) in which they continued to build, at least in part, their preferred self-identities within the status hierarchies that were structuring their friendship networks. In this regard, it became apparent that whilst many of the preconditions and predispositions for students’ engagement in sport at university appeared to be relatively fixed by age 16, childhood socialization ‘was still making a difference, that is, having additional effects’ (Birchwood et al., 2008, p. 292) on their present-day participation in the peer-oriented networks which were playing a significant role in

students' lives.

Notwithstanding the profound impact that friends and peers had on students' regular sport participation up to and including the university years, these groups also played a similarly influential role in the secondary socialization of the least active students in the sample. It was not the case that the least active were occupying networks characterized by a general absence of more or less close friends and peers. Rather, it was that these students' networks incorporated friends who were less likely to be interested in sport, who during childhood were themselves less likely to have been exposed to the required kinds of socialization associated with longer running sport careers, and who were more likely currently to engage in more non-sport leisure activities than sport (Hendry et al., 1993; Roberts, 2014; Roberts & Brodie, 1992). The kinds of socialization experienced by students who were the least active currently meant that, by the time they had reached university, they were also the least likely to restructure their leisure to accommodate, or revive, their former engagement in sport (Roberts, 2014; Roberts & Brodie, 1992) within their collective group habituses.

The ways in which sport came increasingly to compete for more of the time, money and attention of students (especially the least active) is explored in more detail below, but before doing so it worth reflecting briefly upon the significance of a third broad dimension of habitus referred to earlier in this thesis: institutional habitus (Ball, 2012; Reay et al., 2010; Reay et al., 2005). It was noted in Chapter 2 that research in the sociology of education has shown that students' experiences of university generally are developed in the context of a variety of social processes 'internal' to the institution in which they are studying (e.g.

curricular, facilities, ethos and reputation, staff), as well as others 'external' to them but often from within the HE environment (e.g. funding, policies, tuition fees) (Reay et al., 2010; Reay et al., 2005). Of particular relevance to the present study were the availability, kind and quality of campus-based sports facilities the provision of which are thought to make an important contribution to the engagement of students in competitive and recreational sport activity (Burke et al., 2006; Coalter, 2013; Downward & Rasciute, 2014; Leslie et al., 1999; TNS-BMRB, 2013). As others have concluded (TNS-BMRB, 2013), in this study on-site sports facilities were often used by a minority of students (usually male and residential students), with the majority (especially females and commuting students) preferring to engage in sport off campus in other settings, including at locally provided private fitness centres and health clubs. Thus, although the provision of modern and aesthetically pleasing sports facilities (Sport England, 2014b; TNS-BMRB, 2013) form an important part of institutional habitus, they played a relatively minor role in boosting engagement among existing, and potential, student participants in this study. Whether students were able to take advantage of the generous sports provisions available on the campuses of both universities depended on their predispositions to use them, their perceived quality, and of their satisfaction with social environments within which they were provided.

Although an institution's reputation for sport (e.g. academically, for its facilities, and in participatory terms) is often symbolically representative of its status and position (Ball, 2012; Furlong & Cartmel, 2009), this also appeared to make relatively little positive difference to the majority of students' experiences of sport. The main impact of sports facilities appeared to lie in the degree to which they boosted the participation of a minority of already active students who often engaged in university sports teams, and those who were already active

prior to arriving at university and regarded themselves as competent players. Intuitively, the provision of sports facilities is one important feature of institutional habitus that is likely to impact on students' experiences of HE (Ball, 2013; Reay et al., 2010; Reay et al., 2005). In practice, however, the degree to which this occurs depends on students' previous sporting experiences; that is to say, the degree to which they had developed the required kinds of predispositions, tastes and preferences for sport during childhood socialization which were to be found within their individual and group habituses. Since these experiences were mainly confined to sport and male students, sports facilities were essentially providing more of the same for the minority of sports-active participants.

Sport careers, leisure lifestyles and the life course

It has been suggested that to adequately understand students' present-day participation in sport, and their sport careers more broadly, requires these to be located within broader leisure lifestyles and how these change during the life course (Green, 2014; Hendry et al., 1993; Roberts, 1996, forthcoming). The findings of this study confirm the importance of undertaking this endeavour, particularly in relation to the changes and continuities that characterized students' lives from the early secondary school years, by which time the predispositions for subsequent participation had become relatively fixed (Birchwood et al., 2008). This was a period in many students' lives (especially the least active) when their frequency of participation, and the number of sports they played, peaked but was simultaneously the life-stage in which many students' sport activity began to drop-off (Birchwood et al., 2008; Green, 2014; Roberts & Brodie, 1992; Scheerder et al., 2005). For students who were presently the least active (i.e. business and psychology students, and females), the early teenage years were the period in which the number of sports

(approximately two) they played stabilized before progressively declining in late adolescence as they entered university. For the most active (i.e. sport students and males), entering the youth life-stage coincided with a doubling in the median number of sports done (from three to six sports) between 13- and 16-years-old, before these stabilized to five sports from age 17 to 20 as their participation in other leisure activities increased (see Chapter 4).

The progressive decline in many students' sport participation during youth was not necessarily related to their decision to turn their backs on sport or suddenly become disinterested in it. Nor, for that matter, was it because they simply swapped sport for a life of sedentariness, as is so commonly believed (Biddle et al., 2004; Green, 2010; Malcolm, 2014; Roberts, forthcoming). Instead, for many students, sport participation came increasingly to compete with a range of other leisure activities as their lives began to 'unfreeze' and they sought to take advantage of the other alternatives available in a crowded leisure market (Hendry et al., 1993; Roberts, 1996, forthcoming). The increased opportunities provided to students by entering diverse leisure markets was one method by which they sought to orientate themselves within their expanding networks of interdependence, and the constraints of those networks to engage in socially desired activities with like-minded peers on whom students were becoming increasingly dependent and interdependent (Dunning & Hughes, 2013; Mennell & Goudsblom, 1998). Using leisure in this way – as a means of responding the figural constraints generated in and through students' relations with others as their lives unfolded – was not surprising. This is because:

as webs of interdependence spread, more people become more involved in more complex and more impenetrable relations. Less abstractly: more people are forced more often to pay more attention to more people, in more varying circumstances. This

produces pressures towards greater consideration of the consequences of one's own action for other people on whom one is in one way or another dependent. (Mennell and Goudsblom, 1998, p. 18)

A recognition of the centrality of friends to students' expanding networks is particularly important not least because previous studies 'into young people's experiences *within* higher education have ... paid little attention to peer relationships and the ways these may affect students' academic studies and/or their extracurricular pursuits' (Brooks, 2007, p. 695; original emphasis), including sport and leisure. By seeking to understand the peer-centred nature of students' networks of figurations, the findings of this study revealed that students' use of alternative forms of leisure provided them with an opportunity to further establish their identities, reputations and status among their peer groups as they obtained greater independence and freedom from their parents (Brooks, 2007; Mennell & Goudsblom, 1998; Miles, 2000; Roberts, forthcoming). One consequence of students' expanding networks and changing use of leisure was the felt need by some to restructure their lifestyles to retain sport in their lives, a process which often involved reducing their involvement in traditional team sports which become no longer organizationally convenient for them. The activities that were more likely to be retained during this period and, later on, during the university years were more individualized, flexible and recreational activities (Fridberg, 2010; Green, 2010; Vandermeerschen et al., 2014; Warde, 2006) which dominated much of their sport participation by the end of compulsory education (Coalter, 2007, 2013; Eime et al., 2013; Lunn et al., 2013). The growing appeal of these activities lay in the way they could be accommodated within students' developing leisure routines during youth and because they were more compatible with their increased preference for 'social' styles of participation (Coalter, 2013; Green, 2010; Roberts & Brodie, 1992). It was also clear that students'

changing sports profiles coincided with a heightened sensitivity towards health and fitness, body image, and self-presentational concerns among a significant proportion of those engaged in sport (Bennett et al., 2010; Coalter, 2007, 2013; Warde, 2006). Concerns with regular body maintenance and surveillance (Dworkin & Wachs, 2009; Warde, 2006; Widdop et al., 2014) for many sports-active students were also associated with their increased engagement in other leisure activities, especially those which were perceived to have a series of health-related consequences (e.g. weight gain), which have been associated with the transition students make when going to university (Kwan et al., 2012; Irwin, 2004).

For all students in this study entrance to the youth life-stage was characterized by increased participation in other leisure activities from which they began to establish individual and collective identities. These leisure activities were used as a means of students' attempts to 'stand out' whilst 'fitting in' (Hendry et al., 1993; Miles, 2000; Roberts, 2006) with their emergent friendship and other peer groups. Although sport – whether played directly or as a source of discussion whilst socializing – was one peer-oriented activity used for these purposes, the growing importance of friends during youth was particularly associated with students' engagement in other leisure activities during university which came to compete for their loyalty to sport (Roberts, 2013, forthcoming). Leisure was in this respect an opportunity for students to manage the transition to university, of establishing further independence from others, and of building a preferred identity among newly acquired university friends with whom they had formed close relationships (Brooks, 2007; Furlong, 2013; Roberts, 2012). The kinds of commercialized leisure activities which they reported doing in the company of friends, included low cost leisure pursuits often undertaken in communal settings (e.g. social media, and playing computer games for among males), alongside peer-oriented costly activities including shopping (particularly for females), attending live sport (dominated by

sports students), and visiting the cinema. As with their participation in sport, the foundations of students' involvement in these kinds of activities were first laid during childhood and early teenage years, before then becoming established features of students' leisure repertoires at university when they were relatively free to choose what they did, with whom, and when (Hendry et al., 1993; Roberts, 2006).

The regular consumption of alcohol was another major use of leisure that students used to establish adult-like tastes and form friendships early in the youth life-stage. As Chapter 6 made clear however, together with processes of habitus formation associated with sport participation, the consumption of alcohol for some students first started in the family home in the early teenage years before they became more established consumers by their mid-teens. Built upon the gradual habituation of alcohol-related experiences during the adolescent years, drinking was generally perceived as an unproblematic leisure activity that characterized students' developing leisure identities and consumption patterns not only as part of an important teenage *rite de passage*, but especially during the university years where alcohol became regarded as one of the 'especially strong signifiers of identity ... so closely connected with the youth-adult transition' (West, 2009, p. 361). Indeed, the consumption of alcohol was an almost cultural universal among students, and especially so among residential students. The communal consumption of alcohol, whether pre-drinking in students' homes, in the Student Union bar, or in local pubs and clubs, served as a social lubricant for students seeking to acquire friends (particularly during their first year), to become accepted among peers to whom they could express their individuality, and to build self-confidence that may lead to sexual encounters with others (Aldridge et al., 2011; Borsari & Carey, 2001; De Visser & Smith, 2007; Terleki et al., 2014). For some students, and especially those who played sport (Dempster, 2009, 2011; Kwan et al., 2012) alcohol-oriented leisure came to be among the

most important means by which they could reliably establish their identities and reputations in the company of others who similarly enjoyed the independence and freedom permitted by university, while others drank infrequently or not at all.

For most students, engaging in sedentary socializing activities such as drinking alcohol was central to their peer-related quest for sociability and excitement which they associated with the process of needing to 'fit in' with friends and acquiring group membership (MacDonald & Shildrick, 2007; Smith et al., 2011; West, 2009). Students' consumption of alcohol was also strengthened by their growing desire to occupy adult leisure spaces in the absence of younger peers (Furlong, 2013; Roberts, 2006), and to engage in one among many other activities that were 'integrally linked to their lifestyles' (West, 2009, p. 369) that were being constructed within the dynamic and increasingly unpredictable life-stage of youth.

The preference among many students for engaging in a variety of non-sport leisure activities during youth was not surprising, because tastes for any leisure activity ebb and flow as young people negotiate the social situations and friendships in which they find themselves (Brooks, 2007; Roberts, 2006; West, 2009). This process typically involved students' taking-up some activities before dropping them in quick succession without ever becoming an established feature of their leisure careers (Roberts, 2006; Sweeting & West, 2008), while other activities (including sport) remained a more or less prominent aspect of their subsequent lifestyles. The ability (or lack thereof) of students to maintain relatively continuous sport careers throughout the transition to youth was particularly important given the increased appeal of other leisure activities to which students began to devote more of their time, money and attention as they entered the youth life stage (Roberts, forthcoming). For those with shallower careers who failed to develop a sufficiently broad repertoire of sports skills and interests when young

(especially females, and those studying business and psychology), the university years were characterized by a greater engagement in more appealing non-sport leisure activities. Active sports participation, which was formerly a more or less common (and sometimes valued) feature of their pre-adolescent lives, became progressively less common even when students remained consumers of sport in other areas of leisure (e.g. through gambling, or watching TV).

As explained earlier, however, the predispositions towards, and interests in, non-sporting leisure at university and during periods of educational transition were not confined to the least active participants whose sport careers were shallower, and more susceptible to disruption, as they were negotiating the transition to youth (Haycock & Smith, 2014b; Roberts & Brodie, 1992). The most sports-active present-day participants with relatively continuous sports careers (i.e. sport students and males) also engaged in health-inhibiting behaviours, often for the same reasons as their less active peers. But for more sports-active students 'playing sport was just one component of their generally busy leisure lives' (Roberts and Brodie, 1992, p. 128) which they frequently restructured to incorporate the equally important, but competing, demands on their leisure time and money. Most of these participants valued and were predisposed towards participating in sport and recognized the importance of keeping fit and healthy as they progressed through education (Haycock & Smith, 2014b; Roberts and Brodie, 1992), and were better able to reshape their leisure habits to sustain sport participation alongside other valued activities (e.g. drinking alcohol) (Sweeting & West, 2008; West, 2009; Smith et al., 2011). Thus, for the most active students, the threats posed to their leisure-sport participation from competing leisure priorities did not appear to be as disruptive to their sport careers in which participation frequently occurred within 'social networks in which sport activity' was 'normal if not expected' (Roberts &

Brodie, 1992, p. 39), which was supported by the various tastes, preferences and predispositions formed much earlier during childhood and expressed through students' present-day individual and group habituses.

Summary

The data reported in this thesis suggested that the major source of difference in students' present-day sport participation, and the richness of their overall sport careers, lay in their everyday childhood experiences of sport. It was during childhood, rather than youth, when the preconditions required for constructing short- or longer-term sport (and leisure) careers were formed (Birchwood et al., 2008; Nielsen et al., 2012; Quarmby & Dagkas, 2010; Quarmby et al., 2011). The differential childhood socialization practices students experienced played a crucial role in the development of sporting habituses and dispositions that provided the foundations upon which present-day inequalities in participation were based, rather than the simple provision of opportunities and facilities in modern day universities. In this regard, the assumed contribution attending HE has previously been expected to make to students' current and future sport participation thus appears to have been over-stated, and in so doing diverted attention from other processes associated with the inequalities that underlie students differential engagement in sport.

When viewed in the context of youth leisure, the findings of this study have also revealed that reported declines in sport participation by social groups such as students are not necessarily because they are eschewing sport altogether. Instead, a sociologically-oriented study of youth sport and leisure, in which the multi-dimensional lives of young people are conceptualized 'in the round' and in the context of their interdependencies, reveals that as young people get older their participation in sport becomes threatened by the increased number of alternative

ways in which they can spend their leisure (Roberts, forthcoming). An awareness of how sport participation during youth occurs in an already crowded 'market-place of leisure activities, styles and identities' (Roberts, forthcoming) is thus an important part of the explanation for why all students, not just the least active, often reduce their engagement in sport as they get older. The degree to which students reduced their sport participation amidst the competition for other uses of their leisure time appeared to depend on whether they had acquired the necessary predispositions, tastes and capitals earlier in life and which continued to generate inequalities in their present-day participation (Roberts, forthcoming). The relative insignificance of HE for students' sport participation, and its implications for policy and practice, are considered in the remaining pages of this thesis.

Conclusion

The context for this study was the relatively unchanged rates of sport participation evident among the general population, including young people, in Britain since the late-1980s which coincided with a doubling in the proportion of students entering HE in the same period. Given those with HE qualifications are more likely to participate in sport than those who do not have such qualifications (e.g. Coalter, 2013; Fridberg, 2010; Lunn et al., 2013; van Bottenburg et al., 2005; van Tuyckom & Scheerder, 2010a), why this process has not been associated with increased participation among adults and youth has remained largely under-researched and unexplained. The purpose of this study, therefore, was to explore this apparent paradox by analysing students' present-day participation and careers in sport and leisure. It did so by seeking to engage with how students' lives were changing during childhood and youth, and how they negotiated the challenges and uncertainties that accompanied their protracted transitions between these life-stages. This approach was central to addressing the key research questions, which were:

- (i) What effect, if any, does HE have on students' sport participation?
- (ii) To what extent do students' sport and leisure careers explain their present-day participation? and
- (iii) How might the relationship between students' sport and leisure careers be explained sociologically?

The purpose of the concluding section of this thesis is to reflect upon the significance of the answers to these questions and the empirical and theoretical contribution of the study to the

existing body of knowledge. The limitations of the research reported here and the implications of the findings for future research and policy will also be explored.

The significance and contribution of the study

It was noted earlier in this thesis that much of the exiting international literature on students' sport participation has been derived from largely quantitative enquiries and surveys, including Sport England's *Active Universities* programme (TNS-BMRB, 2013) and *Active People Survey* (Sport England, 2013). As useful as these studies are in shedding light on the patterns and trends in university students' sport participation and their implications for informing policy and practice, their largely quantitative design limits the degree to which the complexity and diversity of students' sport and leisure careers can be adequately understood. In the present study, the quantitative findings presented in earlier chapters helped identify the major continuities and changes in students' sport and leisure careers by attempting to measure their participation in each year throughout the life course thus far. This approach to studying participation in more quantitative terms proved especially useful in identifying how the differences in sport participation among the most and least active students first emerged during childhood, widened from age 12-13-years-old, and remained relatively set from age 16 onwards.

The emphasis placed upon understanding the trajectories of students' sport and leisure careers was also particularly helpful in making sense of present-day differences in participation, which is not possible when using cross-sectional designs to measure participation in the here-and-now. As in the present study, analysing the sport and leisure careers of present-day participants can assist in demonstrating the limitations of present-centred measures and investigations of participation which are so often used to inform policy and practice in sport.

Adopting a more career- or developmentally-oriented approach to the sport and leisure participation of a cohort of people, including the university students in this study, instead provided a potentially more adequate basis on which to develop explanations of present-day differences in participation. It also helped provide more convincing empirical evidence than that which has so far been produced about the assumed ‘HE effect’ on sport participation, and what this effect/these effects are. Indeed, for reasons explained in Chapter 8, although previous research has frequently emphasized the importance of being degree educated for sport participation, the findings of this thesis suggested that if time spent in HE does generate independent effects on students’ sport participation, these are limited to prolonging, or at least preserving, the participation of those already appropriately predisposed to do so since childhood; that is to say, students who acquired the required kind of sports socialization most conducive to maximizing subsequent participation. Thus, rather than providing evidence of any clear ‘HE effect’ on participation, the trajectories of students’ sport and leisure careers and the differential experiences they recalled of their childhood sport socialization suggested that family background, and the ways in which families spend their leisure, provides a central explanation of long-lasting differences in participation (Birchwood et al., 2008; Nielsen et al., 2012; Quarmby & Dagkas, 2010, 2013; Stuij, 2013).

It should be noted that these conclusions were arrived at because more qualitative methods (namely, semi-structured interviews) were incorporated into the research design of the study alongside the structured interviews which generated largely quantitative data. While recognizing the importance of quantitative data for helping to make sense of students’ engagement in sport and leisure, it was the more detailed qualitative data presented in this thesis that helped explain how students’ sport participation and leisure lives were structured by their individual biographies and habituses, their family circumstances and figurations, and

the broader contexts of their everyday lives. In this regard, the thesis went beyond previous investigations of the relationships that exist between HE and sport participation and began to identify some of the key theoretical concepts that help explain how and why those with HE qualifications are more likely to become present-day participants and remain sports-active into later life. Of particular significance was the centrality of habitus formation (individual, group and institutional) during childhood and associated processes of capital accumulation which occurred in the context of students' lengthening, and expanding, networks of interdependence (Dunning & Hughes, 2013; Elias, 1978; van Krieken, 1998) in which parents initially, and then later friends, peers and significant others became central to students' participation in sport and leisure as their lives unfolded. In particular, building upon the findings of previous investigations (Bourdieu, 1978; Engström, 2008; Nielsen et al., 2012; Stuij, 2013), the socialization processes experienced by the students in this study involved them inheriting strong sporting habituses and values, usually from parents (during primary socialization), who were in turn more able, and likely, to purposively invest (e.g. emotionally, financially, culturally) their offspring with different resources and kinds of 'ability' that formed the basis of their predispositions towards childhood sport participation (Evans & Bairner, 2012; Evans & Davies, 2010; Stuij, 2013; Vandermeerschen et al., 2014).

It was childhood experiences of this kind, and of secondary socialization with peers, that were more likely to support the development of students' sporting capital, a point which provided further evidence for the tentative conclusions offered by other researchers whose investigations have pointed towards the importance of acquiring sporting capital when young to maximize sport participation in later life (Engström, 2008; Nielsen et al., 2012; Rowe, 2015; Stuij, 2013). By providing evidence of the various capitals acquired during the formation of childhood habituses, the findings presented in this thesis offered further support

for the preliminary work currently being undertaken by Rowe (2015, p. 45) whose conceptualization of sporting capital refers to the ‘stock of physiological, social and psychological attributes and competencies that support and motivate an individual to participate in sport and to sustain that participation over time’. The emphasis placed on understanding students’ figurations, how these figurations enable and constrain their participation in sport and leisure, and how students’ interdependencies became increasingly complex as they grew older and attended university, was crucial to understanding the development of students’ sporting dispositions or capital. More particularly, the findings of this thesis provided further support for Rowe’s (2015, p. 45) contention that sporting capital is ‘acquired by education and experience and is influenced by prevailing socio-cultural norms’, particularly from the family and peers.

The theoretical emphasis this thesis placed upon understanding the foundations of students’ sport and leisure careers in terms of habitus formation, capital accumulation, family-based socialization during childhood, and the significance of peer-oriented networks, also added to the emerging literature on how sporting capital is believed to be associated with differential experiences of, and propensities towards, participation (Engström, 2008; Nielsen et al., 2012; Rowe, 2015; Stuij, 2013). As Rowe (2015, p. 46) has noted, ‘people with high levels of sporting capital are more resilient to the potential negative impact on participation of external barriers associated with changes in life circumstances and, should they drop out, are more likely to return to sport than their peers with low levels of sporting capital’. It was clear that, in this thesis, those students with higher stocks of sporting capital and broader sporting repertoires were more likely to remain sports-active at university and, if they had dropped out previously (especially female sports students), were more likely to begin participating again at university than those with narrower sporting careers and lower stocks of sporting capital

during childhood (Engström, 2008; Nielsen et al., 2012; Rowe, 2015; Stuij, 2013). In this regard, the empirical findings and theoretical contentions of this thesis regarding the significance of sporting capital, with its foundations grounded in habituses that become embodied socially and psychologically (Dunning, 2002; Dunning & Hughes, 2013), have the potential to inform future studies which need to examine the processes involved in the formation of durable sporting habituses and capitals (associated with longer-term engagement in sport) if social differences in participation are to be better understood (Rowe, 2015). Among other things, the significance of sporting capital and habitus formation (as conceptualized in this thesis) for future practice lies in the fact that

the focus of programme design and implementation needs to be on building sporting capital and not on increasing participation per se. This shifts the emphasis from judging success of interventions purely by attendance, which is a necessary condition, to judging success by the quality of the experience and the increase in sporting capital that accompanies it, i.e. sufficient conditions. (Rowe, 2015, p. 57)

The other major policy implications of thesis are explained in more detail below, but before examining these issues it is worth considering what might be regarded as the limitations of the research reported in this study.

Limitations of the thesis

Notwithstanding the contribution this thesis makes to existing empirical and theoretical knowledge in the field of sport and leisure participation, there are a number of limitations that must be kept in mind when interpreting the findings reported here. Firstly, and for reasons explained in Chapter 3, there are a number of well-established difficulties of relying upon

self-report measures in which retrospective recall is the primary means of generating (mainly quantitative) data. In the present study, structured interviews were used as the primary method through which self-reported behaviours (e.g. sport participation, alcohol consumption, use of illegal drugs) were captured to help identify the patterns of those behaviours and, in particular, to assist in the investigation of students' sport and leisure careers. To help alleviate the difficulties of relying upon participant recall and the more factual data generated by the structured interviews, the study incorporated other measures such as semi-structured interviews in which students were encouraged to provide more detailed qualitative accounts of their thoughts, feelings and experiences. In particular, while the more quantitative data helped identify the major patterns and trends in students' participation in sport and other leisure activities, particular emphasis was placed upon encouraging students to explain the major continuities and changes in their sport and leisure careers. This search for meaning in students' accounts of the development of their sport and leisure careers during the course of semi-structured interviewing was thus centrally important to the empirical phase of the study, and helped explain the social processes involved in the construction of those careers.

Secondly, and also explained in Chapter 3, the sample of universities represented in this thesis was inevitably limited in number and the institutions were not, and cannot, be regarded as being representative of other universities or of wider social groups. In comparison to other institutions that have long-established histories of sporting excellence and provision, the two universities included in this study did not have a tradition of providing extensive and diverse sports facilities to promote participation and in which students' sport participation was housed. Among other things, the data on students' university-based participation were thus inevitably an expression of the available resources, provisions, traditions, and infrastructure

dedicated to student sport. In this respect the findings, while limited to two universities in England, were nevertheless consistent with other studies that have identified these key contextual features of HE as being central to explanations of sport participation in university settings (Downward & Rasciute, 2014; Downward et al., 2014; TNS-BMRB, 2013).

Thirdly, since the sample of participants represented was composed of so-called ‘traditional’ students (i.e. those aged 20-25-years-old) who were primarily self-defined as ‘white’ and as non-disabled, it is difficult to draw firm conclusions about the extent to which the findings can be generalized to other kinds of students. For example, it may be that students from other ethnic backgrounds, those who are disabled, and ‘non-traditional’ students (e.g. older students studying part-time), have different sport and leisure careers and that the experiences they are able to recall of them are at variance with those reported in this thesis. Whether the introduction of £9,000 student fees – which has resulted in changes in undergraduate student demography (UUK, 2014) – has had implications for the ways in which students participate in sport, on and off university sites, was also not captured in the findings reported here.

Fourthly, it is important that the reader remains mindful of the measure of social class employed in the present study. As Chapter 3 makes clear, students’ social class was calculated according to the number of parents or guardians who had themselves attended HE. Although not ideal methodologically, the use of education (rather than income) as a proxy measure of social class has been commonly used in the broader literature and has generally been regarded as a better measure that provides more robust results in studies which examine the links between participation and major social divisions (Farrell et al., 2014; Gidlow et al., 2006). This is not to say that income is unimportant; indeed, the qualitative findings from the semi-structured interviews provide clear evidence that the disposable income available to

students during childhood and subsequent periods in their lives (especially at university) was an important constraint on their engagement in sport and leisure. In the present study, however, it was evident that adopting education as a blunt proxy measure of social class helped shed light on students' socio-cultural background, as well as some key aspects of the family environments within which much of their primary socialization took place (Birchwood et al., 2008; Lunn et al., 2013; Pot et al., 2014; Roberts, 2011).

Future research and policy implications

To conclude this thesis it is worth reflecting upon some of the major policy and practice implications that arise from the major theoretical and empirical contributions of the research reported here. Perhaps the first point to note is that given the major differences in students' present-day sport participation first emerged during childhood, widened from age 12-13-years-old, and remained relatively set from age 16 onwards, attempts to boost participation thereafter would seem to be among the least effective policy options available (Birchwood et al., 2008; Haycock & Smith, 2014b; Roberts, 2014). Childhood was the life-stage in which students were most open to being recruited and locked into sport, and thereafter the possibility of attracting large numbers of new participants who remain loyal to sport in subsequent years was unlikely (Roberts, 2014). While young people do of course report higher levels of participation than all other age groups, and some young people do continue to maintain and increase (i.e. sport students and males in this study) their participation during the adolescent years, the general trend in participation in this and subsequent periods is towards participating less frequently and in fewer sports. In this regard, the present policy focus on raising sport participation among 14-25-year-olds by various sports organizations, including the DCMS (2012) and Sport England (2014a), would appear misguided and perhaps doomed to failure. In other words, policies intended to promote the level and

frequency of sport participation among the adult population may have limited success, for the effectiveness of this policy approach is likely to disproportionately favour the minority of people who benefited from the required kind of sports socialization in their childhood families (Birchwood et al., 2008; Pot et al., 2014; Stuij, 2013). The findings of this thesis suggest that a more appropriate focal point for policy interventions concerned with boosting longer-term sport participation is therefore not with youth, but with children (Birchwood et al., 2008; Quarmby & Dagkas, 2010, 2013; Stuij, 2013).

Given the significance of habitus formation and the accumulation of sporting capital during childhood for developing the predispositions necessary to maximize future sport participation what, if any, are the implications for encouraging sport participation in the university years? Although time spent at university did not appear to play a significant role in promoting sport participation among students in this study, it is clear that the HE setting was important for sustaining the engagement of current participants and, in some cases, helped reconstitute the sporting careers of former participants (most notably female sport students). In this regard, the provision and promotion of university sport appears to be an important part of policy makers' attempts to sustain participation, but it is unlikely to boost participation above the levels that students are predisposed to do so (Birchwood et al., 2008).

As explained in Chapter 1, an important part of the marketing and investment strategies universities in England have adopted in relation to sport is the enhancement of sports provisions because these are often regarded as being crucial to the development and support of student sport participation (Coalter, 2013; Downward & Rasciute, 2014; Leslie et al., 1999; TNS-BMRB, 2013), especially by funding bodies (DCMS, 2012; Sport England, 2013, 2014b). The findings of this study suggest that while investment in university sport and the

provision of generous sports facilities are important, their potential to promote participation is heavily dependent upon the latent demand for their use. In other words, unless demand for those facilities exists, further investments in university sport provisions are only likely to better serve and accommodate existing participants rather than stimulate participation among ‘new’ players. Indeed, as Chapter 4 indicates, university sport facilities were disproportionately used by, and were more likely to prolong the sport participation of, students studying sport (particularly males) who were already the most active present-day participants. In policy terms, then, it might be argued that there needs to be a ‘reorientation of facility provision towards further meeting the needs of males and females’ (Downward & Rasciute, 2014, p. 8) currently not participating, and who may wish to participate, in university-based sport participation.

If investment in university sports facilities is seen as an appropriate means by which to promote students’ sport participation (DCMS, 2012; Sport England, 2013, 2014b), serious attention must also be given to students’ perceived quality of those facilities and whether their use will encourage satisfying and desirable experiences among participants (Rowe, 2012). On the basis of the data reported here, the perceived quality of university sports facilities, and the social contexts in which they are located, poses additional problems for sports facilitators and policy makers. Given the increased appeal of health and fitness-oriented activities that are more compatible with students’ emerging sport and leisure careers and can be undertaken in university gyms, these settings must be organized so that they correspond with students’ preference for more individualized, flexible, and recreational sports undertaken in supportive and non-judgemental social contexts. The significance of this was evident from students’ views and experiences of their existing university provisions, particularly those of females, who were most likely to report negative experiences of poor

quality university facilities which they thought were not always conducive to encouraging participation because of their dominance by male peers.

Addressing the various difficulties associated with breaking down the gender-related inequalities in facility use (Dworkin, 2003; Dworkin & Wachs, 2009; Pridgeon & Grogan, 2012; Slater & Tiggemann, 2011), whilst also maintaining participation among other groups, is one of the major challenges facing sports facilitators in universities. The funding changes to HE in England, and the associated tendency for more students to commute to universities for their academic studies (UUK, 2014), raise additional difficulties for policy makers wishing to use university campuses as settings of sport promotion. This is because, as the data reported in this thesis and elsewhere (e.g. TNS-BMRB, 2013) indicated, commuting students are much less likely to use the sports facilities available on university campuses and instead prefer to make greater use of locally provided public and private facilities. If this remains the case, then the focus of future policy and programmes may need to be oriented towards maximizing students' use of those facilities, rather than provisions available to them at their institutions, while keeping in mind the increased financial (and other) constraints to which students are increasingly subject to support their academic studies (Hall, 2011; Reay et al., 2010; UUK, 2014).

Those seeking to promote sport among university students and youth more generally must also face another uncomfortable truth: as people leave the child life-stage a range of other leisure alternatives associated with the transition from youth to adulthood come to compete for the time, money and attention of young people and this almost inevitably has an impact on sport participation (Hendry et al., 1993; Roberts, forthcoming). For a minority of students in this study, the richness and breadth of experiences helped militate against the increasing

appeal of other uses of leisure, but for the majority (especially those with more vulnerable and less continuous sport careers) participation progressively declined in conjunction with increased engagement in other adult-like leisure. In this regard, the findings indicated that, as Roberts (2006) observed, students' lives began to unfreeze around age 16 and became increasingly characterized by an engagement in other uses of leisure that were equally, if not more, appealing because of their ability to confer on students positive experiences that enabled them to express their individuality and help construct their identities. The promotion of sport, then, can be facilitated via the provision of facilities and other forms of social support but the success of strategies of this kind must always been seen in the competition provided by other leisure activities that might, in the event, prove more attractive to young people (Hendry et al., 1993; Roberts, forthcoming). Although focused more narrowly on the sporting experiences of young women, the House of Commons Culture, Media and Sport Committee (2014, p. 14) appeared to recognize the importance of locating sport within broader leisure lifestyles, and how these change over the life course, when it claimed that

insufficient attention has been paid to how sport may be incorporated into women's wider lifestyles, the level of competition for women's leisure time, and how the opportunities for women to engage in sport may change at different points in their lives.

A recognition of the ways in which sport becomes one among many other leisure activities that may prove to be more attractive and consistent with people's unfolding, and increasingly individualized, lifestyles, is important. Activities including the consumption of alcohol and other drugs, engagement in popular commercial leisure activities (e.g. eating out of the home, cinemas, shopping, music events), and sedentary leisure activities which include the use of social and other forms of media, are among those which are increasingly adopted as young

people grow older (Hendry et al., 1993; Roberts, forthcoming). They are also often done in the company of like-minded friends and supported by increased disposable income (Roberts, forthcoming). These peer-oriented activities are not, however, always undertaken at the expense of sport: as the findings of this study indicated, they can and often are accommodated within busy leisure lifestyles which feature sport participation, though not always at an intensity and frequency believed to benefit health. The policy emphasis on promoting sport participation over the life course must therefore take into account the appeal of other activities, relative to sport, within an already busy leisure market-place and the ways in which those activities are used to help participants reliably construct their adult identities and reputations (Roberts, forthcoming).

As well as recognising the competition posed by non-sporting uses of leisure, advocates of sport policies and programmes face another particularly significant obstacle in seeking to boost sport participation throughout the life course: the widening of inequalities that contribute to the social differences in sport participation which are the target of those very policies. Of particular significance are widening wealth and income inequalities which have been described as ‘the greatest social threat of our times’ (Dorling, 2014, p. 1). In very unequal countries like the US, Canada and the UK such inequalities are especially related to the tendency for the best-off 1 per cent to fuel (while justifying) rising disparities in income and wealth, which together with poverty ‘have terrible effects on the health and wellbeing of the rest of society’ (Dorling, 2014, p. 24) – the so-called ‘99 per cent’ which are becoming more equal but poorer (Dorling, 2014; Pickett & Wilkinson, 2015).

Given the persistence of income and wealth inequalities, it would seem churlish to expect sport policies and programmes to sufficiently overcome the corrosive effects of inequality

and make a substantial impact on existing health inequalities among the population. Indeed, the findings of this thesis also suggest that it is misleading to assume that the promotion of sport, even as part of a broader package of lifestyle modifications (e.g. improved diet and reduced alcohol), will necessarily reverse longstanding health inequalities that exist among and between social groups. The promotion of sport participation as a means of improving students' lifestyles, without tackling the socio-economic structural determinants of health experienced during periods of transition, is seriously flawed (DHPAHIP, 2011; Pickett & Wilkinson, 2015; Public Health England, 2014; Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010; WHO, 2004). The lifestyles people lead are, of course, important sources of health inequality and the efficacy of any policy or intervention designed to enhance participation is partly related to people's desire to engage in sufficient amounts and intensities of sport that meet recommended health guidelines (DHPAHIP, 2011; WHO, 2010). Simply relying on prolonging students' time spent in education and increases in their sport participation to improve health is, however, likely to be a futile endeavour. Indeed, many of the causes of inequality lie outside the traditional scope of sport policy and are beyond the direct control of sport policy-makers (Coalter, 2013), while universities have long been considered contexts in which advantages generated outside education (Ball, 2013; Reay et al., 2010) are reinforced and expressed in other activities, including sport (Evans & Bairner, 2012; Evans & Davies, 2010).

Given the significance of educational institutions for reproducing advantages first generated in the home and through family practices (Bodovski, 2014; Hartas, 2014a, 2014b; Lareau, 2011; Reay et al., 2010), the simple promotion of sport in universities cannot reasonably be expected to tackle socially patterned inequalities associated with income, poor work and housing conditions and vulnerability to unemployment (Pickett & Wilkinson, 2015;

Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010). As Rowe (2015, p. 43) has rightly argued, it is therefore clear that ‘looking for simplicity in public policy responses to what are complex social, cultural, environmental and behavioural issues provides, at least in part, the explanation as to why it has invariably come up short in its big ambitions for community sport’, including in relation to sport participation among young people. Until this is recognized stubborn differences in present-day sport participation rates – that have their foundations in childhood and youth, but extend over the life course – are likely to remain intact, and the unequal sporting lives students currently lead may become even more unequal in the future.

Finally, it might be suggested that to adequately understand the development of students’ sport and leisure careers (and related health behaviours) then future policy should adopt a career and biographical approach to investigations of participation. As the findings of this thesis suggest, such an approach helps capture the processual nature of sport participation and how this changes in conjunction with wider uses of leisure, the predispositions for which, as with sport, are typically grounded in the participants’ social networks and emerging habituses during childhood. In other words, there is a need for future research concerned with understanding the processes associated with the construction of students’ sporting biographies and careers, the inter-relationships of these with other leisure activities, and how these are each connected to the predispositions formed during childhood.

Given its cross-sectional design, it was impossible in this thesis to examine whether students’ sport participation continued to decline progressively upon graduation and as they began to undertake further transitions to adulthood, including starting or trying to start full-time labour market careers. Longer-term studies of post-university sport and leisure careers of the same cohort of students would thus help explain the degree to which developments in the child life-

stage had effects on participation later in the life course. A more detailed analysis of the individual careers of students would also prove insightful in explaining the differential contribution made to present-day participation of students' early formative experiences of sport, their involvement in different types of sports, and how these can each be related to changes in their individual circumstances and broader social changes. Indeed, as Heath et al (2009, p. 15) have noted, youth research

remains an important enterprise, contributing to a greater understanding of broader processes of social change and, critically, providing important opportunities for young people, if we allow them to set the agenda in a context within which their voices are all too often ignored or under-played.

Future research which seeks to better understand why different trajectories in students' sport and leisure careers almost always lead to different destinations will be greatly enhanced if the lived experiences, and voices, of young people are taken seriously by those claiming to be interested in their lives.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Chapter Three: Methodology – Interview Documentation

Appendix B

Chapter Five: University Students' Current Sport Participation

Table 5.1 Students' participation in some form of competitive sport in the last 12 months by sex and subject (n and %)

Participation in competitive sport	Total	Overall		Males		Females	
		Males	Females	Sport	Business and psychology	Sport	Business and psychology
Yes	58 (48.7)	34 (73.9)	24 (32.9)	25 (92.6)	9 (47.4)	15 (71.4)	9 (17.3)
No	61 (51.3)	12 (26.1)	49 (67.1)	2 (7.4)	10 (52.6)	6 (28.6)	43 (82.7)
Total	119	46	73	27	19	21	52

Appendix C

Chapter Six: University Students' Leisure Careers

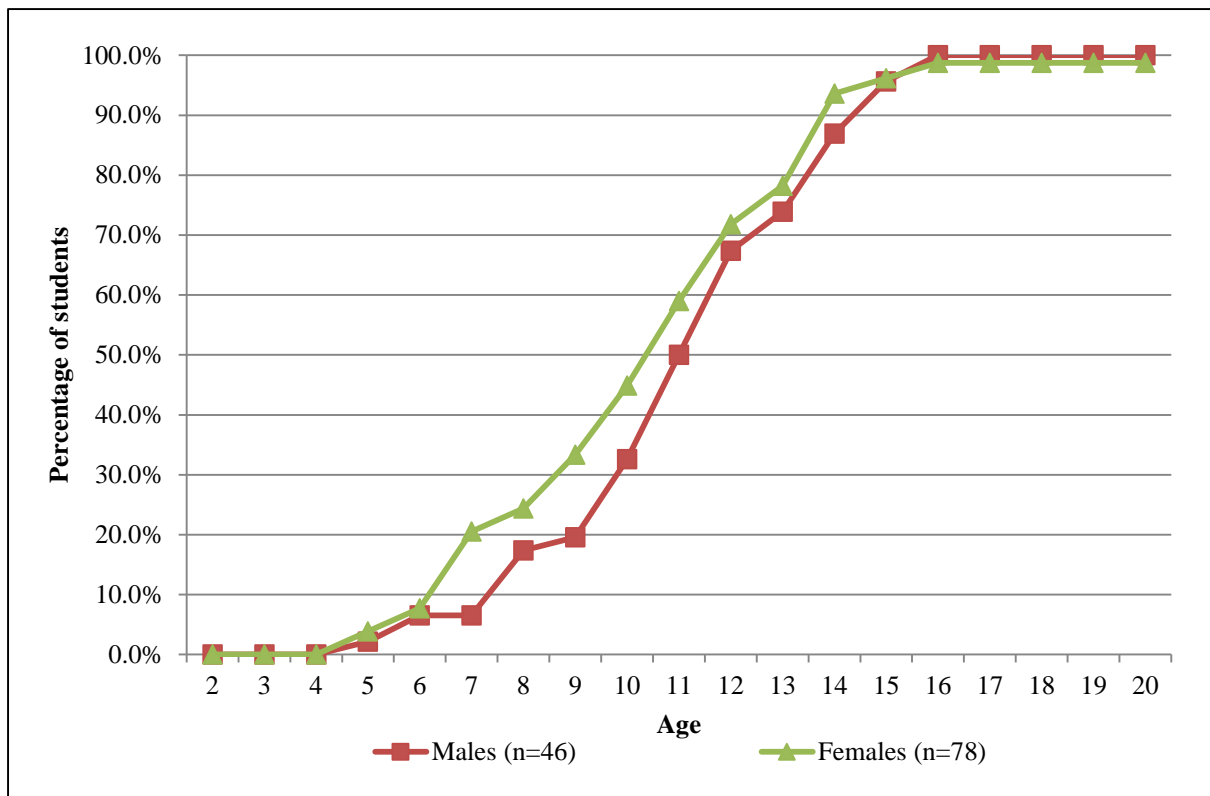


Figure 6.1 Students' use of contemporary music over the life course by sex

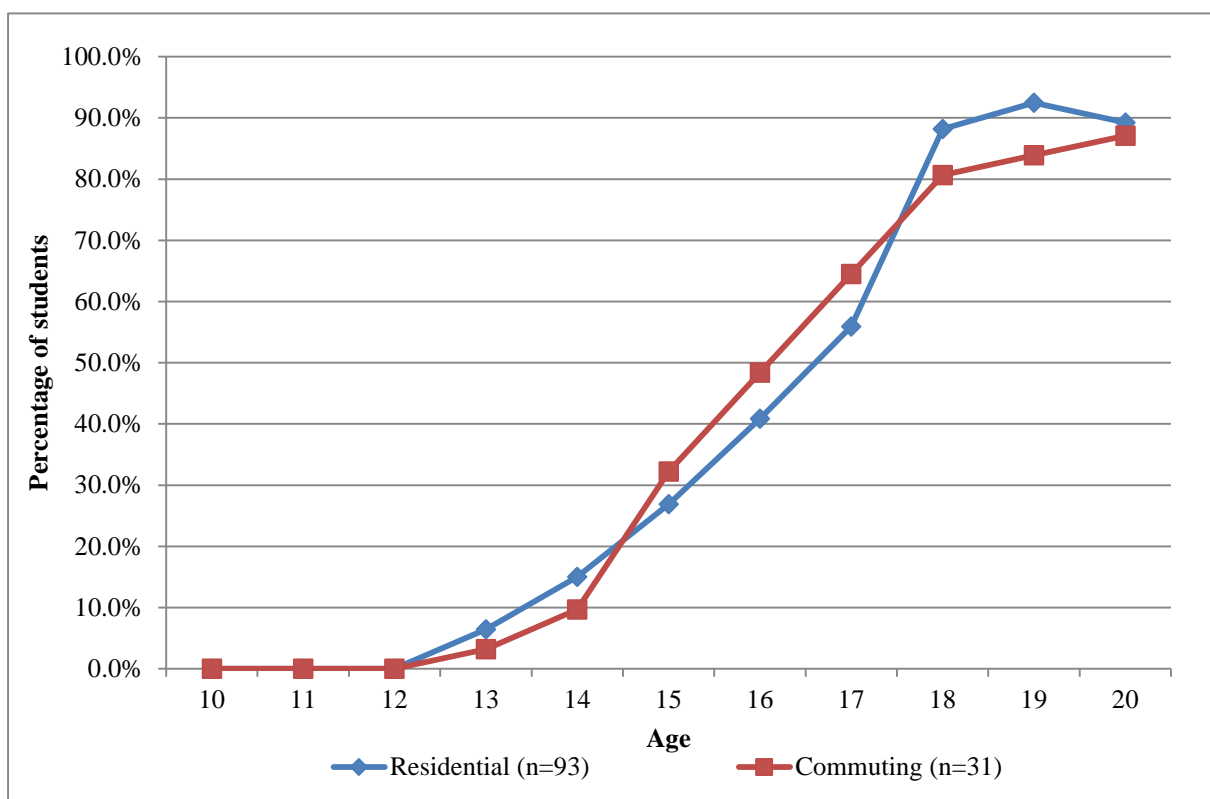


Figure 6.2 Students' monthly alcohol consumption from 10-20-years-old by residential status